

starting out: alekhine's defence

JOHN COX



EVERYMAN CHESS

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Bibliography

Books

Alekhine's Defence, Eales and Williams (Batsford 1973)

A classic and very useful for a positional understanding of the older systems.

The Complete Alekhine and New Ideas in the Alekhine Defence, both Graham Burgess (Batsford 1992 and 1996)

Extremely comprehensive; the first in particular is indispensable.

Alekhine's Defence, Davies (Everyman Chess 2001)

Inspiring rather than comprehensive but very good on the fashionable lines.

The Alekhine for the Tournament Player, Alburt and Schiller (Batsford 1985)

Alburt gave little away but is interesting on his own games.

Alekhine's Defence, Hort (A & C Black 1981)

Comprehensive but languageless and a little dull. However Hort is, of course, a very strong player and his perspective is interesting

Zashchita Alekhina, Bagirov (Fitzculture Sport 1987)

Terrific if you have Russian; Bagirov was the foremost Alekhine player of his day, he held nothing back and his thoughts are invaluable.

Magazines and Databases

Megabase 2003; www.chesspublishing.com; *Chess Informant 1-87*; *TWIC*

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Richard Palliser and Natasha Regan were extremely helpful during the writing of this book, while Jonathan Rogers, Peter Taylor, William Watson and David Coleman also made suggestions. My thanks to them.

Introduction

Introduction to the Alekhine

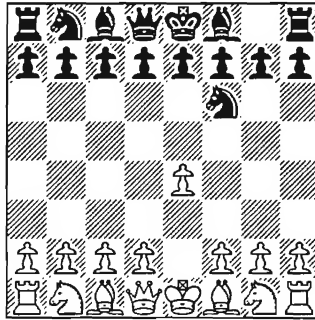


Diagram 1
The Alekhine

Players see the light and take up the Alekhine for various reasons. Legend has it that Fischer's debut with the defence in the 1965 Havana tournament, in which he was playing by telephone, occurred when Ciocaltea shocked Bobby after 1 'd4' Nf6 with 2 e5. 'I thought you said 'd4', snarled Bobby. 'No, no', said the quivering monitor, 'EEE four!' The crowd must have expected all hell to break loose, but Fischer, in one of those unpredictable flashes of equanimity so typical of him, shrugged his shoulders and calmly continued with 2...Nd5, the start of a productive occasional relationship with the defence. Miles also took up the opening for the Capablanca memorial in Havana, but his explanation was simpler: he thought it would be funny to win Capablanca's tournament with Alekhine's Defence (he did, by the way). The great Russian 'Alekhinist', Vladimir Bagirov, was more mystical:

he liked to claim that Alekhine himself had appeared to him in a dream and told him to defend his opening's honour.

Others have dealt better than me with the question of why to play the Alekhine. Burgess says that it's more fun than other openings. I don't know about that, but it does seem to attract the devotee. It is very noticeable in many variations which might have scored quite poorly overall how those who persevere have achieved superb results – Kengis in his eponymous system, and Bagirov in the 4...Bg4 main line, for example – and the same is true of the opening as a whole. It is for some reason an opening which appeals to the rebellious and those of an unconventional cast of mind.

Davies points out that 1...Nf6 is the second best scorer in the databases behind 1...c5 (and no doubt it would score even higher if Kasparov had been playing it these last 20 years!). I might add that it is the only reply to 1 e4 with a plus score at world championship level (trivia buffs may like to name the four occasions on which it has been played; answer below).

Certainly it has considerable practical merit; if nothing else many White players are scared of it and duck the main lines. It also allows Black to choose the type of game to a considerable extent. There is something in the Alekhine to suit all tastes; there are sharp and highly theoretical tactical lines, and it is also possible in almost every line to be out of theory by move 6 with a solid position. With this in mind I have provided below a non-theoretical, a solid, and a tactical/theoretical repertoire for Black, as well as similar suggestions for White.

You will find in the following pages that I have made no great effort to attribute suggestions or analysis – informality rather than passing the work of others off as my own is the object. I have, however, taken care to attribute my own theoretical offerings; my motive is not vanity so much as warning the reader where he might be playing an untested move based only on my own recommendation. From time to time I refer to games I don't have space to give – this is intended to help those with access to databases, although I recognize with regret that will irritate others.

The Alekhine is very fluid as regards pawn structure and I have not given a general positional introduction for that reason. I hope general positional considerations are covered in each chapter and in the various Tips.

The four Alekhine world championship games were Alekhine-Euwe, 29th game, 1935, Spassky-Fischer, 13th and 19th games, 1972 and Ponomarev-Ivanchuk, 6th game, 2002. All were drawn except the first Spassky-Fischer game.

Possible Opening Repertoires

Here are some repertoires worth investigating:

Suggested Non-theoretical Repertoire for Black

Main Line

4...dxe5 5 Nxe5 c6. Presently offering a rare treat to grandmaster and palooka alike. You can play six moves of theory and then be more or less confident that both of you will know no further, while Black is offered a very sound position.

Exchange variation

5...exd6. Solid and dependable.

Four Pawns

6...c5 7 d5 g6. A terrific scorer for Black, with very little theory.

Chase Variation

5...c6 and 6...e6. Then just go ...b7-b6 and play.

Rare Fourth Moves

Glance at the main lines I give.

Others

Meet 3 Nc3 with 3...Nxc3 and 4...d5 and meet 2 Nc3 with 2...e5. This is if you're happy with a Vienna; otherwise there is 2...d5 3 e5 Nfd7 4 e6 fxe6 5 d4 c5 followed by developing all your pieces and aiming at d4 and e5.

Half an hour looking through the lines and you're good to go!

Suggested Positional Repertoire for Black

Main Line

Play the Kengis or Miles systems, or the Old Main Line with 4...Bg4 and 5...e6.

Exchange Variation

Play either ...exd6 or ...cxd6 to taste.

Four Pawns

Learn the lines with 9...Bg4.

Chase

Either as above or with 5...e6 and 6...b6, as in Game 37.

Rare Fourth Moves/3 Nc3/2 Nc3

As above.

Suggested Tactical Repertoire for Black

Main Line

Play 4...g6. Then play Alburts' exchange sacrifice after 7 a4, or ...Na5 lines after 7 Qe2.

Exchange

Play the lines with ...cxd6.

Four Pawns

Choose either 9...Be7 or 6...c5 7 d5 e6.

Chase

Play 5...c6 and 6...d6, as in Game 35.

Rare fourth moves

As above.

Others

Meet 3 Nc3 with 3...Nxc3 4 dxc3 d5, or 4 bxc3 d6. Meet 2 Nc3 with 2...d5 3 e5 Ne4 4 Nce2 f6, but this needs work.

Solid Repertoire for White

Play the main line and then consider the following options.

Miles System

6 Bd3, as in Game 5, or else Be2, 0-0, Re1 and so on, delaying c2-c4.

Kengis System

6 Bc4 and then follow Tzermiadianos' plan in the notes to Game 2.

4...dxe5/5...Nd7

Play 5 Nxe5 Nd7 and now 6 Nf3.

4...Bg4 5 Be2 e6

Play the Main Line without h3 as seen in Games 10 and 11.

4...Bg4 5 Be2 c6

Play 6 0-0 Bxf3 7 Bxf3 and then continue as in Game 14.

4...g6

Play the line 5 Bc4 Nb6 6 Bb3 Bg7 7 Qe2.

4...Nc6

Play 5 c4 Nb6 6 exd6 exd6 7 h3.

Tactical/Theoretical Repertoire for White

Play the main line and then consider the following options.

Miles System

6 Be2 Bf5 and now go for it with 7 g4!?

Kengis System

If you can make it work give 6 Qf3 a go, otherwise 6 c4.

5...Nd7

Get on with it with 6 Nxf7 and then choose the 8 g3 lines.

4...Bg4 5 Be2 e6

See Bologan's idea in Game 12.

4...Bg4 5 Be2 c6

See 6 Ng5 as in Game 16.

4...g6

7 a4 and continue like Grischuk in Game 18.

4...Nc6

Play the lines with 5 c4 Nb6 6 e6.

Offbeat Tries for White






4 f4, as in Chapter 8, is underrated, or 2 Nc3 with Hector's ideas is excellent if you don't mind a Vienna.

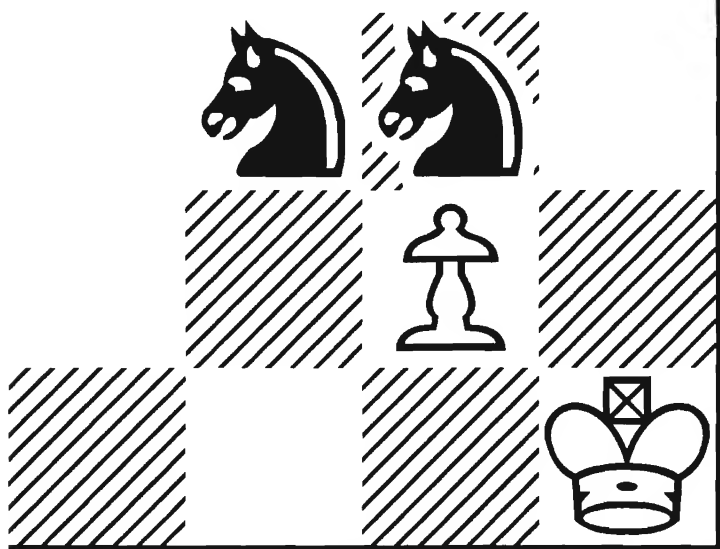
Whatever you choose, good luck in your adventures with the Alekhine.

John Cox,
London,
October 2004

Chapter One

Main Line with 4...dxe5

-  Introduction
-  Black Plays 5...g6 (Kengis)
-  Black Plays 5...c6 (Miles)
-  Black Plays 5...Nd7 (Provocative)
-  Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 (Diagram 1)

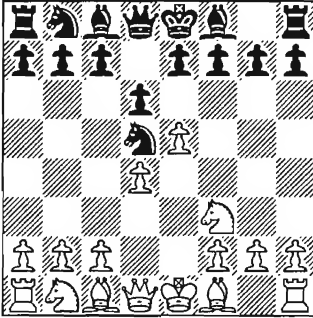


Diagram 1
The Grandmaster choice

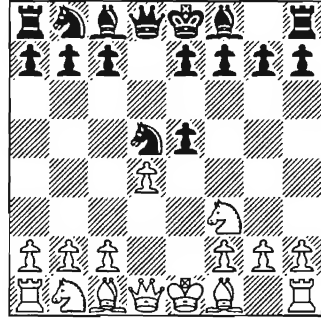


Diagram 2
Black takes immediate action

This is White's most solid system and the most popular choice of grandmasters. When a variation has been dubbed both the Classical and the Modern, as this one has, you can be pretty sure that it contains some timeless merit. Rather than commit himself either to maintaining the pawn on e5 (4 c4 Nb6 5 f4) or to its exchange (4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6) White keeps his options open until he sees how Black plays. Black can now either exchange on e5, the modern method, or set about development with 4...Bg4 (Chapter 2), 4...g6 or 4...Nc6 (both Chapter 3).

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 (Diagram 2)

The revival of Black's fortunes against the main line has been associated very much with this move in recent years. It looks as though Black loses time by inviting the white knight to a strong outpost in the centre of the board but, in fact, the result can be a gain of time. Black's idea is that when he challenges the knight with ...Nd7 White will not want to exchange and will have to retreat with Nf3. Thus in effect it will be Black who has gained the move ...Nd7. In addition, by making the exchange before fianchettoing the king's bishop, Black retains the option of changing course should White retake with the d-pawn. Usually Black does not want to fianchetto the king's bishop while the pawn on e5 remains because if the pawn is solidly defended the bishop will be shut out of play.

5 Nxe5

In the event of 5 dxe5 Black's best is 5...Bg4, which leads to the system described in Game 14 without Black having had to play either ...c7-c6 or ...Bxf3; this is considered very comfortable.

Black plays 5...g6 (Kengis)

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 5 Nxe5 g6

The characteristic move of the system. Now that the diagonal is clear Black develops his king's bishop to its best square. The price he has to pay for this is that usually he will need to give up his queen's bishop since once the pawn comes to g6 there is no suitable outpost available for it. The system is rightly named after Latvian grandmaster Edvins Kengis. He was not the first to play it but his fine results in the period 1988-1996 brought the system general acceptance.

White now has various choices. The main line is 6 Bc4 (Games 1 and 2), while 6 c4 is the other main try (Game 3). White also has a sharp move in 6 Qf3 (covered in the notes to Game 3) and quiet approaches in 6 Be2 and 6 g3 (see the notes to Game 1).

Assuming that White plays one of the positional lines in Games 1 and 2, the Kengis is really quite a non-theoretical and simple system. The problem is learning to play the resulting positions well. Kengis was a master of this and playing through all his games in the system on a database is time well spent. The typical position is that which arises after, say, move 17 in Game 2 (Diagram 15). There are variations in the placing of the a-pawns and of course of the pieces but this type of position, with Black's queen's bishop exchanged for a knight, will arise more often than not. Black is rock solid and well placed to meet any aggressive attempts, but what are his positive ideas?

This opening system as a whole reminds me of Michael Stean. Michael's an accountant now, I believe – millionaire, no doubt – but when I was a lad he was a grandmaster whose lucid classic *Simple Chess* influenced a generation of English juniors. The Kengis system didn't exist in those days but if it had Stean would have instantly recognised it as a perfect exemplar of two theories he expounded in that book. The first is that the structure where Black has exchanged his 'd-' and c-pawns for White's 'd-' and e-pawns is in some sense fundamentally favourable for Black. Stean's point was that Black can advance his pawns on the queen's wing – a minority attack, in fact – and hope to exchange down to a single weak white pawn there, and meanwhile Black has an extra central pawn which gives him a better chance of establishing a protected outpost in the centre, or alternatively he can advance the central majority and use the 'e-' and f-pawns to expose White's king. This idea – the antithesis of the classical view that a queenside pawn majority was in itself a good thing – was something of a revelation to a schoolboy player brought up in the 1970's on Euwe and Pachman. As a hard and fast rule it's nonsense, of course (as Stean would be the first to say), but it's a useful insight as a way of thinking about the game, and in particular about this opening. Black wants to play ...c7-c5: this is his fundamental break (...e7-e5 may equalise completely but is not usually playable). He will then have

exactly the structure Stean was talking about, and most often he will already have advanced his a-pawn and thus have made some progress with a minority attack. He will also have the knight on d5. This is difficult to drive away by c2-c4 without White creating weaknesses. For example if White has met the a-pawn's onslaught with a2-a4 then c2-c4 will allow the knight into b4 and simultaneously cripple White's majority, while if he has allowed Black's a-pawn to a4 before playing a2-a3, then c2-c4, while it will evict the knight, will leave the c-pawn exposed without pawn protection, and the b-pawn backward.

These ideas may seem rather abstract, but they can frequently be observed in endgames or late middlegames arising from this opening, and so can the principle that Black must use his own pawn majority positively – once White's d-pawn has been removed ...f7-f6 and ...e7-e5 is a common theme (see Mukhametov-Bagirov, Bern 1995, for example).

Stean's second theory was that some, spatially inferior, pawn structures have capacity for a certain number of pieces, and that if the defender can exchange down to that number the space advantage won't matter. Black's pawn structure in the Kengis is a classic example of this – Black has space for three minor pieces to be deployed efficiently, but not four, hence the fate which invariably awaits the queen's bishop in this system. Indeed this is something of a theme of the Alekhine as a whole: perhaps I might call it the 'three piece rule.' It may sound simple, but it was realising this which enabled players to see that 4...dxe5 5 Nxe5 gained time not for White but for Black.

TIP: In this system Black must try to exchange a minor piece: if possible a knight for the one on e5, or the light-squared bishop for the one on b3, but bishop for knight will do.



Black Plays 5...c6 (Miles)

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 5 Nxe5 c6 (Diagram 3)

This is the hottest variation of the Alekhine right now. The late Tony Miles was not the first to play it, but his successes with it from the mid-nineties have made it the trendiest way to play, ahead even of the Kengis system. Like the Kengis, the most obvious motive is to prepare ...Nd7 without allowing Nxf7 (see Game 8). Compared to the Kengis, the merit of 5...c6 is that Black preserves the options of his king's bishop, and hence also of his queen's bishop – in the Kengis this piece almost always has to be exchanged, since once it develops to g4 and is challenged with h3 it cannot retreat to h5 in view of g2-g4. 5...c6 also makes the knight on d5 more flexible: one day White will play c2-c4 and, when he does, the additional option of retreating to c7 will be available, a post from where it is less easy to shut the knight out of the game than is the case with b6. The drawback is perhaps that ...c7-c6 loses a little time – in the Kengis ...c7-c6 is played only out of necessity in reply to Bc4.

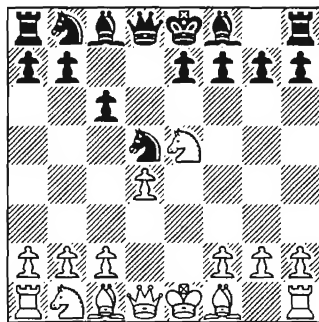


Diagram 3
The latest trend

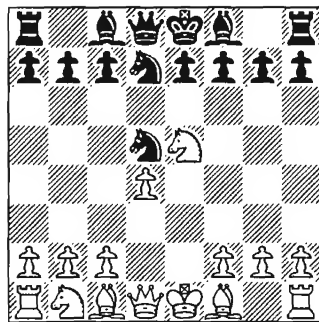


Diagram 4
Black invites Nxf7

White has a wide choice of moves after 5...c6. He can develop his king's bishop to e2, d3, c4 or even g2, he can drive the knight away immediately with c2-c4, or he can play Nd2, intending to bolster the e5-knight with N2f3. Of these, 6 Be2 (Game 4) is Kasparov's choice and by some distance the main line.

Black Plays 5...Nd7 (Provocative)

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 5 Nxe5 Nd7 (Diagram 4)

5...Nd7 is a move with an entertaining history. It first appeared at a high level in the 1965 Candidates Match between Tal and Larsen. On seeing the knight arrive on d7 Tal was unable to believe his eyes at the opportunity he was being offered, thought for 45 minutes, and continued quietly instead of sacrificing... in the end he barely managed to draw. Subsequent analysis purported to prove that

6 Nxf7 Kxf7 7 Qh5+ Ke6

was winning for White (see Game 8), and the variation disappeared until the early 1980's, when people started to play it as Black, and to win. Today the theory on the sacrifice is extensive: to be up to date you need a good knowledge of Polish correspondence chess, and no doubt somewhere there are websites devoted to it. At the moment, however, theory favours Black, and the line which is giving Black the most trouble is actually the patient 6 Nf3, which we see in Game 9.

The variation does have two significant practical drawbacks: first, White can draw at once with 8 Qg4+ Kf7 (8...Kd6 is suicide) 9 Qh5+; secondly, you have to know a fair amount of theory which you will rarely get to play, since White is not likely to venture the sacrifice off the cuff. On the other hand, it is quite possible that Black's fourth and fifth moves are objectively the best: it is hard to believe that Black should be much worse, if at all, after 5...Nd7 6 Nf3.

Illustrative Games

Game 1

□ L.Christiansen ■ E.Kengis

Manila 1992

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 5 Nxex5 g6 6 Bc4 (Diagram 5)

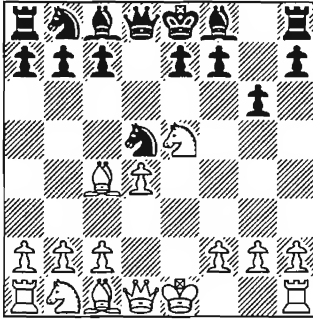


Diagram 5
Active development

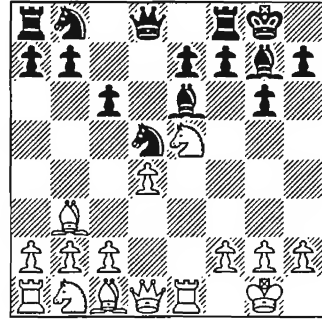


Diagram 6
Black prepares ...Nc7

We should note that 6 g3 is perfectly sensible, after which Black should steer for ...e7-e5 rather than push the c-pawn. For example 6...Bg7 7 Bg2 0-0 8 0-0 c6 9 Re1 Bf5 10 c3 Nd7 11 Nf3 Re8 12 Nbd2 e5! 13 Nc4 Bg4 is level. Although ...e7-e5 is rare in the Kengis White's bishop on g2 does not restrain it by pressure on f7 as the b3 bishop does in the main line, and it is also useful to keep the c6-b7 pawn barrier intact against White's bishop.

6 Be2 is not a theoretical option but has been played by some good players. Then 6...Bg7 7 0-0 0-0 8 c4 Nb6 is natural, and now Black has reasonable play after both 9 h3 Nc6! and 9 Nc3 Be6 10 Bf3 (10 b3 c5 is the note to White's ninth in Game 3) 10...c6 11 b3 f6! 12 Ng4 Bxg4 13 Bxg4 f5, winning the d4-pawn.

6...c6

Deduct points for 6...Bg7?? 7 Nxf7 Kxf7 8 Qf3+.



WARNING: In these ...dxe5 lines always remember to watch out for Qf3, especially when the d5-knight is unprotected.

7 0-0 Bg7 8 Re1

White's alternative 8 Nd2 is seen in the next game.

8...0-0 9 Bb3

This is White's most popular choice at this point, although he can also

play 9 c3. Black continues in the same way with 9...Be6 10 Nd2 (for 10 Bb3 see the next note) 10...Nd7. Now 11 Nd3 Nc7 forces the even more desirable trade of bishops, while 11 Nef3 Bg4 leads to very typical positions similar to the next game. 11 Nxd7 Qxd7 is harmless although Black's play in van der Wiel-Bagirov, Erevan 1996, is worth remembering: 12 Ne4 b6 13 Ng5 Bf5! 14 h3 f6! 15 Nf3 Rae8. Black then took his bishop to f7, with a very solid position in which he can slowly arrange for ...c6-c5.

9...Be6 (Diagram 6) 10 Nd2

10 c3 Nd7 11 Nf3 Nc7 12 Bxe6 (after 12 Bc2 Black can either play 12...c5 or 12...Bd5, after which he may even be able to aim for ...e7-e5) 12...Nxe6 is much the same (13 Qb3 Qb6). A purposeful move is 10 h3, aiming to play 10...Nd7 11 Nf3 and avoid the ...Bg4 pin. Black continues as usual with 11...Nc7; if he is allowed to exchange the light-squared bishops he is doing fine, while after 12 c4 he can continue with Davies' 12...Nb6 13 Qe2 a5 14 a4 Nc8!, intending either ...Nd6-f5 or ...b7-b5. This position well illustrates some themes of the system: once White is provoked into c2-c4 his d-pawn is weak and his majority on the queenside has been crippled; in addition the ...b7-b5 strike, trading away the c-pawn, isolating the d-pawn and securing the mighty d5-square, is typical.

10...Nd7 11 Nef3 Nc7

Black could also go 11...Bg4 with the usual sort of game, but in this exact position he can get ...c6-c5 in and trade the light-squared bishops.

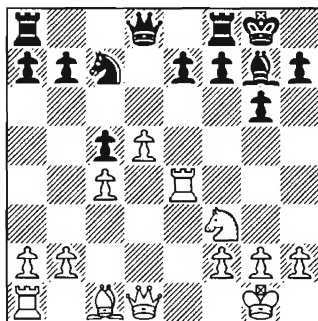


Diagram 7
Time for a pawn break

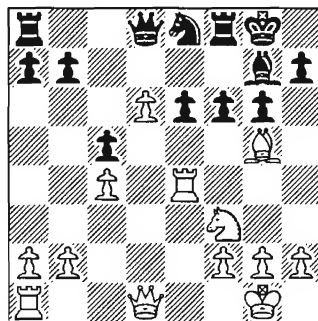


Diagram 8
A critical position

12 c3

12 Nc4 a5 13 a4 Bd5 is also fine.

12...c5 13 Bxe6 Nxe6 14 d5 Nc7 15 Ne4 Nf6 16 c4

After 16 d6 exd6 17 Nxd6 Ncd5 18 Nxb7 Qc7 19 c4 Qxb7 20 cxd5

Nxd5 Black's active pieces easily compensate for his slight structural disadvantage. 16 Nxc5 Ncx5 17 Nxb7? Qb6 is the same theme.

16...Nxe4 17 Rxe4 (Diagram 7) 17...e6

17...b5 would be the other thematic break, but here the equally typical reply 18 Bg5 would be strong.

18 Bg5

18 d6 Ne8 19 Bf4 Qb6 leads White nowhere.

18...f6 19 d6 Ne8 (Diagram 8) 20 Rxe6

A critical moment. 20 d7 fxg5 21 dxe8Q Rxe8 favours Black, but Christiansen could have baled out with 20 Be3 Qxd6 21 Qxd6 Nxd6 22 Rxe6 Nxc4 23 Bxc5 with a drawn endgame. The text looks like a rash venture, but Christiansen does okay with it in the game.

20...fxg5 21 Qd5 Kh8 22 Rae1

22 Nxc5 is met by 22...Bf6, freeing the g7-square for the king.

22... Nf6 23 Qxb7 Qb6 24 Re7 Qxb7 25 Rxb7 Rfe8 26 Rxe8+ Rxe8 (Diagram 9)

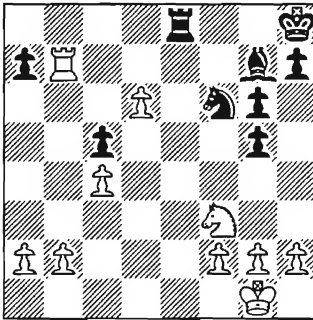


Diagram 9
Decision time

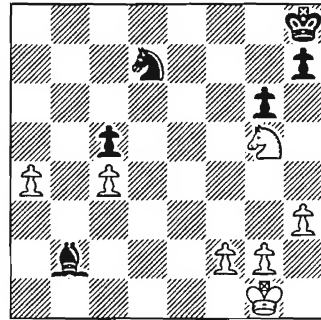


Diagram 10
Black should be winning

27 h3

Again White could – and surely should – have baled out with 27 d7, when 27...Nxd7 is forced as 27...Rd8? 28 Ne5 Kg8 29 Rxa7 leaves Black totally tied up, but 28 Rxd7 g4 29 Nd2 gives Black at least adequate play for his missing pawn, for example 29...Bxb2 30 Rxa7 Re2 31 Nf1 Bd4 32 Ne3 Re1+ 33 Nf1 Re2 with a repetition.

27...Ne4 28 d7 Rd8 29 Rxa7 Bxb2 30 a4 Nf6 31 Nxc5 Rxd7 32 Rxd7 Nxd7 (Diagram 10)

Black must be winning this, but Christiansen puts up a good fight.

33 a5 Nb8 34 Ne4 Na6 35 f4 Ba3

It might have been better to bring the king up rather than go imme-

diately for the a-pawn, but only analysis of some complicated pawns versus pieces positions in twenty moves' time could really tell us.

36 Nd6 Bb4 37 Nb7 Kg7 38 Kf2 Kf6 39 Kf3 Ke7 40 Ke4 Kd7 41 Kd5 Nc7+ 42 Ke4 Na6 43 Kd5 Kc7 44 Nd6 Bxa5 45 Ne8+ Kd8 46 Nf6 Nc7+ 47 Kd6 Bd2 48 g3

Not 48 Nxb7 Bxf4+ 49 Kxc5 Ke7 50 g4 Ne6+ when White's knight is sidelined and Black wins.

48...h5 49 Ne4 Be3 50 h4

Again, not 50 Nxc5 h4 51 gxh4 Bxf4+ when Black's pieces combine well to drive White's king from its present dominating position.

50...Bd4 51 Ng5 Bf2 52 Ne4 Be1 53 Ke5

After 53 Kxc5? Ke7 54 Kb6 Ne8 55 c5 Ke6 56 c6 White wins the knight, but Black's king marches into the kingside and he wins.

53...Ke7 54 f5 gxf5 55 Kxf5?

White could have drawn with 55 Nxc5! Bxg3+ 56 Kxf5 Bxh4 57 Kg6 Bf2 58 Nd3! here. It is difficult to believe that Black couldn't have won this ending at some point. Kengis indicated 45...Kb6 and 47...Ne8+ as earlier tries.

55...Na6!

Not 55...Ne6 as Black needs this square for his king.

56 Kg6 Ke6 57 Ng5+

57 Kxh5? Ke5 is easy for Black. Instead Christiansen drives back the king because of the trick 57...Ke5? 58 Nf3+, and continues his ingenious resistance.

57...Ke7 58 Ne4 Ke6 59 Ng5+ Kd7 60 Ne4 Kc6 61 Kxh5 Nc7 62 Kg6 Ne8 63 h5 Nd6 64 Nxd6

White has done everything he can but it's still lost. 64 Nf6 Nxc4 65 h6 Ne5+ 66 Kf5 (66 Kg7 Bc3! 67 h7 Nd7 and ...Bxf6+) Nf7 67 Kg6 Nxb6! 68 Kxh6 c4 69 Ng4 c3 70 Ne3 Bd2 is a particularly cruel point.

64...Kxd6 65 g4 Ke6 66 Kg7

Nothing helps: 66 g5 Bd2 67 h6 Be3 68 Kh5 Kf5 69 g6 Kf6 70 g7 Kf7 illustrates the winning method.

66...Bc3+ 67 Kf8

Or 67 Kg6 Ke5 with a similar finish to the last note.

67...Kf6 68 Ke8 Bd2 69 Kd7 Ke5 70 Ke7 Be3 71 Kd7

71 Kf7 sets an instructive trap: 71...Kf4 72 h6 Kxg4?? allows a draw with the switchback 73 h7 Bd4 74 Ke6 Kg5 75 Kd5 Kg6 76 h8Q, but the cool 72...Kg5! wins.

71...Kd4 72 Ke6 Kxc4 73 Kf6 Kd5 74 g5 c4 75 g6 c3 0-1

It's close but Black wins: 76 g7 Bd4+ 77 Kf7 Bxg7 78 Kxg7 c2 79 h6 c1Q 80 h7 Qc7+ 81 Kg8 Ke6! 82 h8Q Qf7 mate. A terrific battle. The ending was amazingly difficult to win for Black. Christiansen defended himself superbly with the exception of one lapse.

Game 2

□ Z.Almasi ■ Kengis

Bern 1996

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 5 Nxe5 g6 6 Bc4

6 Nd2 at this stage is possible: 6...Bg7 7 Ndf3 0-0 8 c4 (8 Bc4 c6 is the game) Nb6 9 Be2 N8d7 10 Bf4 c5 is fine for Black after either 11 dxc5 Nxc5 or 11 d5 Nxe5 12 Bxe5 Bxe5 13 Nxe5 Qd6 14 Nf3 e6.

6...c6 7 0-0 Bg7 8 Nd2 (Diagram 11)

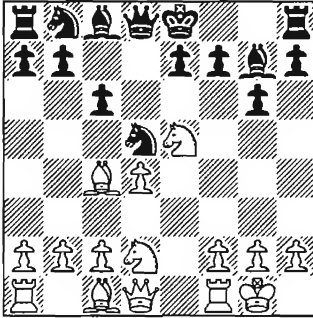


Diagram 11

White prefers knight play

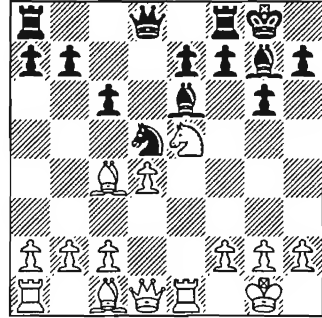


Diagram 12

Danger!

White intends to send this knight to f3. Sometimes he will exchange the other knight, but it is usually thought that White does better to retain more pieces by retreating to d3, as Almasi does. In fact White's move order is not accurate. With 8...Nd7 at this point Black can force an exchange of knights since 9 Nd3? leaves the d-pawn hanging. If White wants to be sure of getting the version with Nd3 he should play 7 Nd2 Bg7 8 Ndf3.

8...0-0 9 Ndf3 Nd7 10 Nd3

10 Re1 Nxe5 11 Nxe5 is the alternative. White can then arrange his pieces comfortably with Qf3, Bg5 and Rad1, but Black can arrange his conveniently also, for example with 11...Be6 (Diagram 12). Now 12 c3? Bxe5 and 13...Nxc3 at least equalizes for Black.

WARNING: When Black plays ...Be6 with his knight on d5 and White's bishop on c4, watch out for the trick with ...Bxe5 and ...Nxc3!

11...Be6 12 Bb3 a5 13 a4 Qc8 14 c3 Rd8 has been played in many games, with equality. Black can continue, for instance, with ...b7-b6 and ...Ra7 to lend support to e7, and then arrange ...c6-c5. 11...Be6 12 Bf1 a5 13 a4 Qc8 14 c3 Rd8 is much the same.

10 Re1 Nxe5 11 dxe5 is also possible, of course, but allowing the open



d-file in this fashion rarely achieves anything in the Kengis System, and this position is no exception: 11...Bg4 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Qxf3 e6 is already equal, Black continuing with ...Qc7 and doubling on the d-file.

10...a5 (Diagram 13)

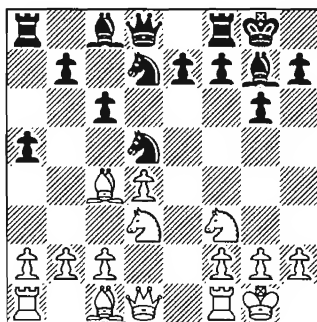


Diagram 13
Black's logical advance

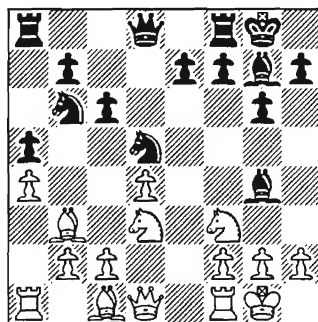


Diagram 14
Black's problem bishop

A thematic move. Black forces White to weaken his queenside to prevent the threat to trap the bishop, and sets in motion the usual minority attack.

11 a4

One drawback of this move is that it is now never going to be possible to push Black's knight away with c2-c4 without giving it the juicy b4-square. For this reason 11 a3 is sometimes preferred. This was played in Tzermiadianos-Kengis, Komotini 1992, in which Kengis' unbeaten streak in the opening came to an end. White's plan in that game was simple and direct: c2-c3, Qxf3, Re1, Bd2, Rad1, Bc1, Bb1, Nf4 and then launch the h-pawn and try to deliver mate. Kengis failed to find his usual counterplay and went down in flames. This is a simple and dangerous way for White to play; I have space only for the moves but the game is worthy of investigation for prospective White players: 11 a3 N7b6 12 Ba2 Bg4 13 c3 e6 14 h3 Bxf3 15 Qxf3 Nc8 16 Re1 Nd6 17 Bd2 Nf5 18 Rad1 Qc7 19 Bc1 b6 20 Nf4 Rfd8 21 Bb1 Nd6 22 h4 b5 (22...h6!?) 23 h5 b4 24 hxg6 hxg6 25 Qg3 Nxf4 26 Bxf4 bxa3 27 bxa3 Qd7 28 Be5 Ne8 29 Be4 a4 30 Rd3 Nd6 31 Qh4 f5 32 Bxc6 Qxc6 33 Bxg7 Kxg7 34 Qe7+ Nf7 35 Rxe6 Rd6 36 Qf6+ Kg8 37 Qxg6+ Kf8 38 d5 1-0.

Black needs to prepare ...c6-c5 rather more directly than Kengis did in that game, perhaps with the same ...Nd7 plan as in the Almasi game; his ...b5-b4 was not as effective since by the time it arrived White could ignore it. It is harder to ignore ...c6-c5 since losing the d-pawn is a lot more serious for White than losing, for example, the a-pawn. Nor were the wanderings of the b6 knight helpful: f5 is only a

good square for this if it either inconveniences a bishop on e3 or attacks the d-pawn after c2-c4.

11...N7b6 12 Bb3 Bg4 (Diagram 14)

There is a difference of opinion about whether Black should play instead ...Bf5xd3, eliminating the knight which is holding back ...c6-c5. Kengis switched to the text after trying ...Bf5, and for that reason I'd go with it too, but there's probably not much to choose between the two.

13 c3 e6 14 h3 Bxf3 15 Qxf3 Nd7

Another characteristic regrouping. The knight was doing nothing on b6. Sometimes it goes via c8 to f5, but from d7 it supports c5 and also has the option of going to f6 to help defend on the kingside.

16 Re1 Qb6 17 Bc4 h6 (Diagram 15)

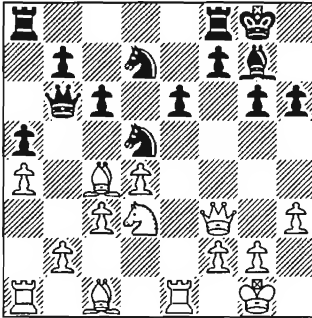


Diagram 15

A useful nudge of the h-pawn

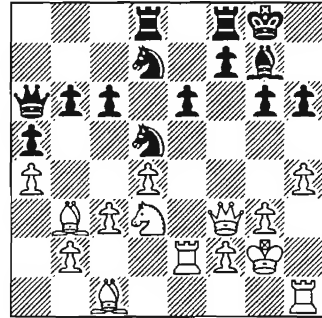


Diagram 16

White toys with h4-h5

This position had been reached before and this move was Kengis' novelty which, again, is typical of his handling of the opening. Often White will play h3-h4 in an attempt to get somewhere on the kingside, and often Kengis meets this with ...h7-h6, intending to answer h4-h5 with ...g6-g5, rather than panicking and putting his own pawn on h5 as lesser players often do (this serves only to help White open lines on the kingside). Another benefit of ...h7-h6 is to control g5 so that a rook can come to the d-file in peace without being annoyed by Bg5.

18 Bd2 Rad8 19 Re2 Rfe8

Kengis has decided not to prepare ...c6-c5, instead placing his pieces where they restrain White, waiting. Black is immensely solid in these positions; White can claim he is slightly better with the two bishops and a space advantage, but watch how far even a player of Almasi's class gets.

20 Rae1 Qc7 21 h4 Qc8

Not ...h6-h5.

22 g3 b6

Black can't arrange ...c6-c5 due to the pressure on d5 and down the e-file, and he doesn't care to play ...N7f6 and allow Ne5. But he can simply wait until White commits his forces elsewhere. Meanwhile he makes useful moves.

23 Kg2 Qb7 24 Bb3 Qa6

Pressing annoyingly on the loose d3-knight.

25 Bc1

25 c4 Ne7 doesn't help White as then the d-pawn needs looking after.

25...Rf8

Unpinning the e-pawn

26 Nf4 N7f6 27 Nd3 Nd7 28 Rh1 (Diagram 16)

I suppose the idea of this was at some point to play h5 and meet ...g6-g5 with Bxg5 hxg5, h6 etc. One can imagine that if White had a bishop on c2, for example, this might give quite a dangerous attack, since ...Bf6 blocks both the f6-square and the f-pawn and might allow Qe4-h7+, while ...Bh8, h7+ Kg7, Qh5 might also be awkward.

28...c5!

Exactly so! Black has arranged his pieces so that as soon as Almasi tries to get somewhere on the kingside he has this equalizing break.

29 dxc5 bxc5 30 Bxd5

This is necessary as the threat of ...c5-c4 and ...Ne5-d3 was too strong.

30...exd5 31 Re7

I'm not at all sure about this. It seems to me it was high time to recall the other rook from its h1 outpost. Black's threat is ...c4 and ...Ne5, and to my mind 31 Rhe1 was the natural way to prevent that.

31...c4 32 Ne1 Ne5?!

This wins material and is possibly objectively the best, but I suspect Kengis had underestimated the play White now enjoys. Instead I think 32...Qd6 was the practical move – the rook has to retreat and then 33 Re2 Nc5 seems to leave Black considerably better, White's knight on e1 being a particularly poor specimen and his a-pawn being marked for death.

33 Rxe5! Bxe5 34 Bxh6 Rfe8 35 Nc2

It's entirely possible Black has a good defensive sequence here but a sudden change in the pace of the game like this is always difficult to cope with.

35...Qc6 36 Bg5 (Diagram 17)

36...Rb8

A committal move. Instinctively I would prefer 36...Rd6, but I imagine these moves were being made during a time scramble, and a deep

analysis would be required to say what is best.

37 h5 Rxb2 38 Ne3 Qe6 39 Ng4 Bg7 40 h6 f5

Reaching the time control, but by now things have definitely gone wrong.

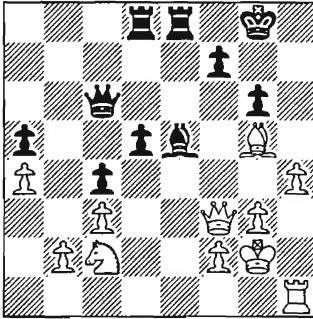


Diagram 17

Where should the rook go?

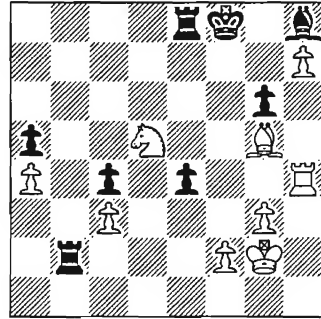


Diagram 18

The rook decides

41 Ne3 Bh8

This seems a bit feeble to me; Black still had some defensive chances after 41...Bxc3 42 h7+ Kh8 43 Nxc4 Qe4 44 Nxb2 Bxb2 – 45 Bd2 Qxf3 46 Kxf3 Re4 47 Rh4 Bf6! might be an important resource – and I don't quite see how White improves on that.

42 Nxd5 Qe4 43 Qxe4 fxe4 44 h7+ Kf8 45 Rh4 (Diagram 18)

Decisive. The threat of 46 Rf4+ forces Black to start shedding pawns.

45...Reb8 46 Rf4+ Ke8 47 Ne3 Bxc3 48 Rxe4+ Kd7 49 Nxc4 Rc2 50 Re7+ Kc6 51 Bf4 Rf8 52 Rc7+ Kd5 53 Ne3+ 1-0

A game very characteristic both of the system and of Kengis' great skill with it, as he outplayed an opponent who has been among the top 20 in the world, although in the end Almasi's greater strength told.

Statistics

White has 63% with 6 Bc4, but it is noticeable how well players who persevere with the system do – like Kengis, who after four losses in his junior days took the system up regularly in 1986 and didn't lose a game in my database until 1992 (over 25 games).

Theoretical?

No. The usual type of middlegame arises all but automatically. You need to know what to do then, though.

Theoretical Status

Solid. The weight of the struggle will always be in the middlegame.

Game 3

□ Grischuk ■ Baburin

Torshavn 2000

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 5 Nxe5 g6 6 c4 (Diagram 19)

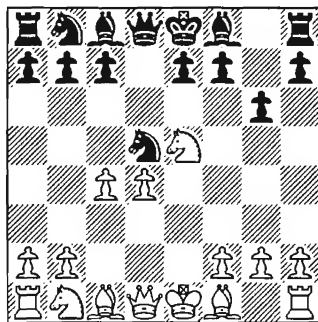


Diagram 19
White evicts the knight

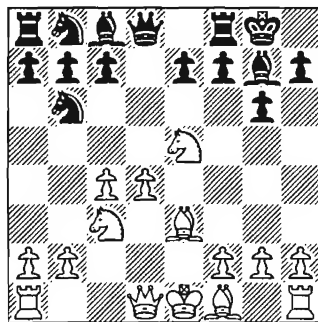


Diagram 20
Black delays ...c7-c5

A direct but rare try. Another rare (fortunately) but very dangerous try is 6 Qf3. In fact this is the only move which might conceivably refute the Kengis. The idea is to grab material after 6...Be6 7 c4 Nb4 8 Qxb7 (8 d5 Nc2+ is nonsense since White has to put his king on the d-file after which the pin prevents dxe6 – 9 Kd1 Nxa1 10 Nd2 Bf5 11 Bd3 Nd7). Black is supposed to have a strong reply in the exchange sacrifice 8...Qxd4 (8...Nc2+ is very complicated) 9 Qxa8 Qxe5+ 10 Kd1 N4c6, when natural moves give him a strong attack, e.g. 11 Nc3 Bg7 12 Be3 0-0 13 Qb7 Rd8 14 Ke1 Nd4 15 Bd3 Nbc6 16 Nd5 Nxd5 17 cxd5 Qxd5. This has only been played in one game, however, and I don't think the story is by any means over. The next page might be Fritz's 10 Be2 instead of 10 Kd1, for example 10...Bxc4 11 Qxb8+ Kd7 12 0-0 Qxe2 13 Nd2, or 10...Nc2+ 11 Kd1 Nxa1 12 Qxb8+ Kd7 13 Qxa7. I haven't seen this suggested anywhere but it looks quite interesting to me. At least White isn't the only one with his king wandering about the centre...

6...Nb6 7 Nc3 Bg7 8 Be3

White addresses ...c7-c5. The other way to try and prevent this is with 8 Bf4. Black can then continue with either 8...0-0 9 Be2 c6 10 0-0 Be6 11 b3 N8d7, with a very solid position, or Kengis' cunning 8...0-0 9 Be2 a5, when his idea is 10 0-0 Nc6 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Be5 Bxe5 13

dxe5 Be6 14 b3 Qxd1 15 Rad1 a4 with a typical endgame which is probably about equal.

8...0-0 (Diagram 20)

8...c5 was always Kengis' choice but 9 dxc5 Qxd1+ 10 Rxd1 Bxe5 11 cxb6 Bxc3+ (best – 11...axb6 12 Bd4 is just better for White) 12 bxc3 axb6 leads to an endgame which is not too exciting for Black and quite possibly nastily worse, a natural continuation being 13 Rd2 Nd7 14 Be2 Nc5 15 0-0 Bf5 16 Bf3 0-0 and now White has a number of tries, e.g. 17 Re1. It may be that Black has a defence to all of these but there must be more to life than defending this sort of position.

9 Rc1

This is a fine move. To understand the idea we need to look at the most obvious alternative, 9 Be2. This is rather well met by 9...Be6 10 b3 (10...Bxe5 was threatened, winning the c-pawn, and 10 d5 Bxd5! 11 Nxg6 Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 hxg6 13 cxd5 Qxd5 wins a pawn) 10...c5. Now 11 Rc1 is an inferior version of the text (11...cxd4 12 Bxd4 f6 13 Nf3 Bh6 14 Ra1 Nc6 15 Bc5 Nd7 develops smoothly, e.g. 16 Ba3 Qa5 17 Bb2 Rad8), while 11 0-0 allows 11...Nc6! 12 Nxc6 bxc6 when White is hampered by the undefended c3-knight, e.g. 13 dxc5 Bxc3 14 Rc1 Bg7 15 cxb6 axb6 with equality. The point of 9 Rc1 (Nigel Short's move) is to avoid the need to meet 9...Be6 with 10 b3 – instead 9 Rc1 Be6?! runs into the effective 10 Ne4.

9 f4 is sharp, aiming to maintain the e5-knight where it is and castle queenside. Black should still aim for ...c7-c5, although 9...c5? 10 dxc5 is obviously not the way to do this. 9...N6d7 is a good move (better than 9...N8d7 since this allows the b-pawn to b5 and the queen to a5, and leaves the b8-knight in place to come to c6), when one game continued 10 Qf3 c5 11 0-0-0 Qa5 12 Nxd7 Nxd7 13 Bf2. Black now had a choice of two good plans – 13...Re8 14 Be2 cxd4 15 Bxd4 e5, completing the demolition of White's centre and at least equalizing, and 13...Rb8 14 Be2 b5 with fierce play. In the game Black lost the plot and mixed these ideas with 13...Rb8 14 Be2 cxd4 15 Bxd4 e5?!

9 Qf3 is another sharp move, but Agdestein's fine reply 9...f6 10 Nd3 e5 11 dxe5 fxe5 12 Qd1 Nc6 leaves Black already better with the knight coming to d4.

9...c5 10 Be2

White might still seek a modest edge with 10 dxc5 and either 10...Qxd1+ 11 Kxd1 Bxe5 12 cxb6 axb6 13 Bxb6 Bxc3 14 Rxc3 Rxa2 15 Kc2, or 11 Nxd1 Bxe5 12 cxb6 axb6 13 a3, but this hasn't been tried.

10...cxd4 11 Bxd4 Bh6

11...Be6 still does not force 12 b3? – instead White replies 12 Bf3!. Black might have tried to invert the order of his next two moves with 11...f6. I think the answer to that is not 12 Ng4 preventing ...Bh6, when 12...Nc6 13 Bc5 Qxd1+ 14 Nxd1 (14 Rxd1 Bxc3+ 15 bxc3 Na4 wins a pawn) 14...f5 15 Nge3 Nd7 16 Ba3, for example, is reasonable

for Black, but 12 Nf3 Bh6 when, surprisingly, 13 Be3 Bxe3 14 fxe3 is quite strong as White's development and ideas of Qb3, 0-0, Rd1 and Nd5/Nd4 are hard to handle.

12 Ra1 f6 13 Ng4! (Diagram 21)

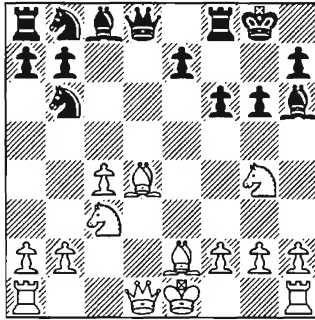


Diagram 21
Uncompromising play

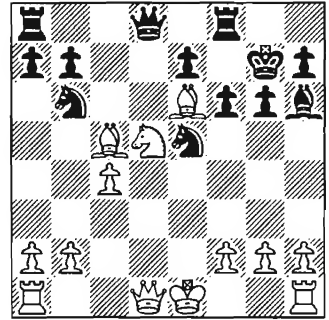


Diagram 22
White maintains the pressure

13 Nf3 Nc6 14 Bc5 Be6 is much less pointed since 15 b3 is met by 15...Nd7 followed by ...Qa5, as mentioned above.

13...Bxg4

The only sensible move.

14 Bxg4 Nc6 15 Bc5

Grischuk refrains from the tempting 15 Be6+ Kh8 16 Bc5 when 16...Qc7 causes difficulties with its threat to fork the bishops by ...Qe5. White then has to play 17 Qe2 when 17...Ne5 18 b4 a5 gives Black counterplay (Black played his king to h8 and not g7 so that Nb5-d4-e6 in this position should not be check).

15...Ne5?!

This move does not work out. I think Black should have played 15...f5 as the bishop is just too strong once it lands on e6. Then 16 Be2 (16 Bf3 Ne5 is annoying) 16...Qxd1+ 17 Rxd1 Bg7 is interesting – White cannot defend the c3-knight since 18 Rc1? Bxc3+ 19 Rxc3 Na4 is a disaster and 18 0-0 loses material to 18...Bxc3 19 bxc3 Na4. Best seems 18 Bf3 but after 18...Rfd8 (or even 18...Bxc3!?) I don't see that White is all that well placed; certainly this was better than what happens in the game.

16 Be6+ Kg7 17 Nd5! (Diagram 22)

A strong move. 17 0-0 Nexc4 was nothing like so clear.

17...Nxd5

17...Re8 is met not by 18 b3? (when Black continues as in the game but instead of ...Nxc5 later has ...b7-b6, as e7 is defended) but by the

powerful 18 Qe2. Black can take the c-pawn but White castles and brings his rooks to the central files with great pressure.

18 cxd5 Qa5+ 19 b4 Qa6 (Diagram 23)

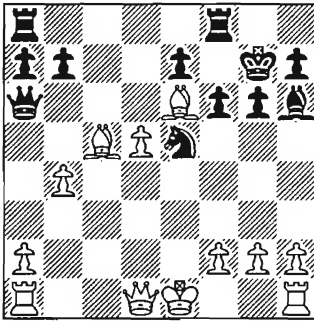


Diagram 23

Is a check on d3 a problem?

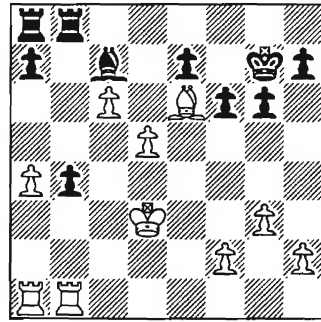


Diagram 24

Can Black hold?

Perhaps Black was relying on this move, but Grischuk's calm reply makes it clear that the displacement of his king is not as important as the consolidation of White's bind.

20 Qe2 Nd3+ 21 Kf1 Nxc5 22 bxc5 Qxe2+

Davies' 22...Qa5 might be better but Black stands poorly. White's bishop on e6 is paralyzing both black rooks single-handedly, and I don't see how Black can rectify this problem. Having said that, the ending arising after the text is surely lost.

23 Kxe2 b6

A deeply unpleasant move to have to make, but otherwise the b-pawn cannot be defended.

24 c6 Bf4 25 Kd3 b5 26 g3 Bc7 27 Rhb1 Rfb8 28 a4 b4 (Diagram 24)

Black's dark-squared blockade enables him to avoid losing on the queenside, but Grischuk opens a second front and the cramped black pieces cannot defend both wings.

TIP: In the ending one weakness (here the queenside) in the opposition camp is seldom enough to win. You need to create a second weakness (here the kingside) and alternate attacks until the defence cannot keep up.

29 Kc4 a5 30 Kb3 Bd6 31 Re1 h5 32 Rac1 Ra7 33 Rc4 Rc7 34 Rec1 Ra8 35 h4 g5 36 g4 Rh8 37 Rg1 Kf8 38 gxh5 Rxh5 39 Rcg4 Kg7 40 f4 Ra7 41 fxg5 Ra8 42 gxf6+ Kxf6 43 Rf1+ Ke5 44 Rg5+ Rxg5 45 fxg5 1-0

Black's helplessness towards the end was striking. A fine brisk win by



Grischuk in his characteristic style, but I think Black has more resources in the opening.

Statistics

White has scored 57% after 6...Nb6.

Theoretical?

A bit, yes. 6 Qf3 is complicated rather than theoretical (and is an interesting field to analyse, if you like that kind of thing). One can play against 6 c4 without knowing any theory, but it's a dangerous approach, and worth a little study.

Theoretical Status

There haven't been that many games, probably because this variation is sharp and White players suspect Black players will know more about it than they do. 9 Rc1 has a good reputation, though no doubt there's much to be discovered. 6 Qf3 is supposed to be refuted, although I'm not at all sure...

Black can also try to slide into the Kengis by the move order 1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 g6 5 Bc4 c6. I do not recommend this. White can reply 6 exd6 Qxd6 7 0-0 Bg7 (7...Bg4 is not yet a good idea because of 8 h3 Bxf3 9 Qxf3 Bg7 10 Nc3!, exploiting the weakness of f7) and now 8 h3! leaves Black in breach of my three piece rule as he is unable to trade a minor piece, which in turn means he has to develop his c8-bishop to b7, for example 8...0-0 9 Re1 Nd7 10 Bb3 b5 11 Nbd2 Bb7 12 Ne4 Qc7 13 Bg5 e6 was better for White in Svidler-Akopian, Halkidiki 2002. It is also possible that White can arrange to recapture with the d-pawn on e5, for example 6 h3!? dxe5 7 dxe5, the resulting set-up usually proving awkward for Black's kingside fianchetto. Furthermore, in comparison to lines with ...e7-e6 and ...Be7, Black must either play ...e7-e6 and weaken f6, or spend the whole game worrying about e5-e6 from White.

Game 4

A.David C.Bauer

Clichy 2004

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 5 Nxe5 c6 (Diagram 25)

Based on the remarks in the introduction, you wouldn't expect 6 Bc4 to be critical, and it isn't. A good example is van der Weide-Miles, Saint Vincent 2000, which continued 6...Nd7 7 Nf3 (7 Nxd7 Bxd7 8 0-0 Bf5 is completely equal, for example 9 Bg5 Qd7 10 Bb3 e6 11 c4 Be7!) 7...N7b6 8 Bb3 Bg4 9 Nbd2 e6 10 0-0 Be7 11 h3 Bh5 (this is the difference from the Kengis: Black keeps the bishop, which is considerably more effective than White's, which is stuck on b3) 12 c3 0-0 13 Ne4 Bg6 14 Qe2 Nd7 15 Re1 a5 16 a4 Re8 (preparing ...e6-e5) and Black was very comfortable.

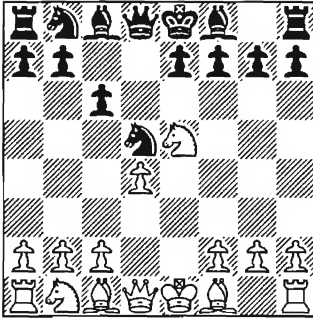


Diagram 25
The flexible 5...c6

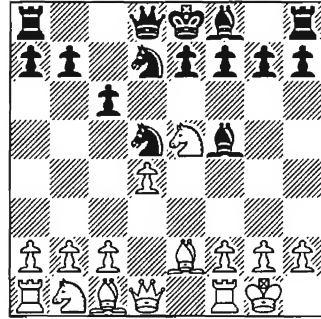


Diagram 26
Black's trademark challenge

6 Nd2 seems wrong to me. White tries to maintain a knight on e5, but exchanging a pair of minor pieces must surely help Black. Black has usually played 6...Nd7 7 Ndf3 (7 Nd3 is illogical, perhaps Black's simplest being 7...e6 and ...c6-c5) 7...Nxe5 8 Nxe5 g6 9 Qf3 (this strong placement of the queen is one of White's compensations for having allowed the undesirable exchange of knights in Nd2 systems) 9...Be6 10 c3 Bg7 11 Be2 a5, leading to positions very similar to the Kengis system. Black will probably find himself forced to move his bishop from e6 and exchange it for the knight on d3, when White can always claim a tiny edge with his two bishops (the unopposed light-squared bishop can be a particular demon). Instead I rather like Black's play in Zapata-Grunberg, Isle of Man 2002, where Black played 8...Bf5 instead of 8...g6. After 9 Nxf7 Kxf7 10 Qf3 Black can draw at once with 10...Kg6 11 Qg3+ Kf7 12 Qf3 or play to hang on to the piece with 10...Ke6 11 Bc4. He should avoid 10...e6 11 g4 Nb4, which at first sight looks quite strong, but actually after 12 gxf5 Nxc2+ 13 Kd1 Nxa1? just loses to 14 fxe6+, so Black has to continue 13...Nxd4 14 fxe6+ Kxe6 15 Qg4+ Nf5+, when Black's exposed king is the more serious.

White, too, has to be a little careful after 6 Nd2 Nd7 7 Ndf3 Nxe5 8 Nxe5 Bf5, since the routine 9 Be2 e6 10 0-0 Nb4 is decidedly embarrassing, while 9 Bd3 Bxd3 10 Qxd3 concedes equality at once. Zapata-Grunberg itself quickly lurched out of control with 9 Qf3 e6 10 Bd2 (and not 10 Bd3? Bb4+ 11 Kd1 when White's inadvertently wandering king proved too big a handicap in Arakhamia-Baburin, 4NCL 2004) 10...Qb6 11 0-0-0 Qxd4! 12 Bd3 Ba3!? (did White really have enough for his pawn after 12...Qxe5 13 Rfe1 Qf6 and so on?) 13 Nc4 Bxd3 (White was offering the exchange after 13...Bg4 14 Qg3 Bxd1, when it's not clear to me that either 15 Rxd1 Be7 or 15 Nxa3 Bh5 offer enough compensation) 14 Nxa3 Bf5 15 c4 Bg4 16 Qg3 Bxd1 17 Rxd1. This time 17...Nf6 18 Bb4 is too dangerous, and both players chose to bale out with 17...0-0-0 18 Bg5 Qc5 19 Bxd8 Rxd8 20 Qxg7 Nb4 with equality.

6 g3 Nd7 7 Nf3 transposes to Game 9. 6 Bd3 is the next game.

6 Be2 Bf5

This move is a recent invention, although very logical. Black wants to get in ...Nd7 without the inconvenience of having to move the knight again to develop his bishop if White replies Nf3. The older – and still very valid – method was 6...Nd7 7 Nf3 g6 8 c4 Nc7 9 Nc3 Bg7 10 0-0 0-0, which Tony Miles played a number of times. Then 11 Re1 c5 12 d5 b5 (de Firmian-Miles, Chicago 1994), 11 Bf4 c5 12 d5 (Degraeve-Miles, Mondariz 2000) or 12 dxc5 (Watson-Baburin Kilkenny 1994) and 11 Be3 a6 12 a4 a5 (Apicella-Miles Linares 1995) all give Black a decent position. White might do better to delay 8 c4 and instead play 8 0-0 Bg7 9 Re1 0-0 10 Bf1 with the idea of meeting 10...Bg4 with 11 Nbd2 and h2-h3. This position can also arise in the Kengis variation, and Black should continue as there with ...Bxf3 and...e7-e6 and prepare ...c6-c5.

7 0-0

The main alternative to this is Kasparov's brash 7 g4, which has also been the choice of Almasi and Judit Polgar. Black replies 7...Be6, and now not Kasparov's 8 c4 Nb6 9 b3 f6 when Black wins a pawn, but 8 f4 f6 9 Nd3 (or 9 f5 Bc8 and ...e7-e6) 9...Bf7 10 0-0 Na6, when Black seems fine after 11 Nc3 Nxc3 12 bxc3 g6 (Polgar-Short Bled 2002) or 11 Nf2 Nac7, although both positions are messy and unclear.

7...Nd7 (Diagram 26) 8 Bg4

Rather feeble. The natural way to play is 8 Nf3, when Loeffler's clever 8...h6 is probably a good choice. The idea of this is to make a useful move while preventing 9 c4, when 9... Nb4 10 a3 Nc2 11 Ra2 Nxd4 now wins a pawn (had Black played 8...e6, then 12 Qxd4 Bxb1 13 Bg5 would be strong). A continuation like 9 a3 e6 10 c4 N5f6 11 Nc3 Bd6 12 b4 0-0 13 Bb2 a6 14 Re1 b5 was fine for Black in Luther-Loeffler, Austria 2002. Notice the active deployment of the bishop on d6 rather than e7, and the ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5 manoeuvre – both are typical of Black's play in this line. 9 Bd3 Bxd3 10 Qxd3 e6 11 c4 N7f6 12 Bf4 Be7 13 Rad1 Qb6 is also equal (Ramesh-Cox, Isle of Man 2004).

8...Bxg4 9 Qxg4 e6

White was hoping his queen would exert some annoying pressure on g7 after 9...Nxe5 10 dxe5. That wasn't so bad for Black, but the text is easier.

10 c4 Nb4 11 Nxd7 Qxd7 12 Qe4 Rd8 13 a3 Na6 (Diagram 27)

White manages to drive Black back, but he has no advantage.

14 Be3 Be7 15 Nd2

Perhaps 15 Nc3 was more natural, but by threatening to bring the knight to e5 White manages to provoke a slight weakness.

15...0-0 16 Nf3 f6 17 Rfe1 Rfe8 18 Bd2 Nc7 19 Ba5 b6

White would rather like to exchange his bishop for the knight on c7, since the latter both defends e6 and prevents all hope of a d4-d5 break, while supporting Black's own potential push of the b-pawn.

Naturally Black prevents this.

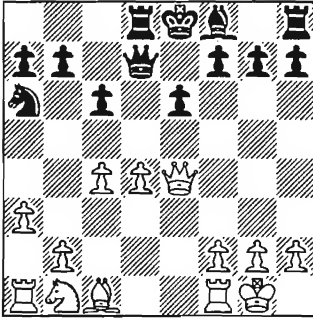


Diagram 27
Black is fine

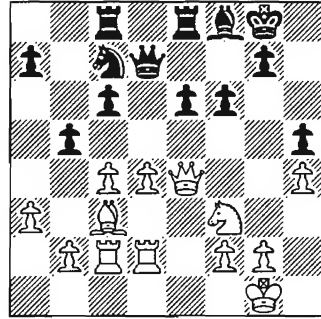


Diagram 28
Black undertakes positive action

20 Bc3 Bf8 21 Rac1 Rc8 22 h4 h5 23 Re2 Bd6 24 Rcc2 Bf8 25 Red2 b5 (Diagram 28)

Neither side has much to do, but after due consideration Bauer decides he is not satisfied with a draw by shuffling.

TIP: In this pawn structure, Black's primary breaks are ...c6-c5 and ...e6-e5, but pushing to b5 to remove the c-pawn and establish an unchallengeable outpost on d5 is always another option.

26 Ba5 Na6

Of course not 26...bxc4 27 Bxc7.

27 Re2

A curious move which rather invites Black's next. Something like 27 Qe2 was sensible.

27...c5

With the knight out of range of d5 27...bxc4 is no good. White might have been advised to try 28 Red2 now, when 28...cxd4 29 Rxd4 Qc6 30 Qxc6 Rxc6 31 b4 e5 32 Rd7 Re7 33 Rxe7 Bxe7 34 c5 is a sample continuation to show Black's ideas – if he can take the knight to c6 and king to e6 he will be better. After 28 cxb5 Qxb5 29 Bc3 c4 Black can use d5 for his knight after all.

28 dxc5 Nxc5 29 Qg6 (Diagram 29)

It looks as though time trouble was affecting the play. The text is not bad, but it needs following up correctly.

29... bxc4 30 Qxh5

30 Rxc4 was necessary. Then neither 30...Qb5 31 Rec2 Qxa5 32 b4 Qxa3 33 bxc5, nor 30...Qd3 31 Qxd3 Nxd3 32 Rxe6, is quite as good as it looks for Black, so the position is still about equal.



30...Nd3 (Diagram 30)

Now, however, Black is doing well with his strong knight, and to make matters worse White notices only one of the threats.

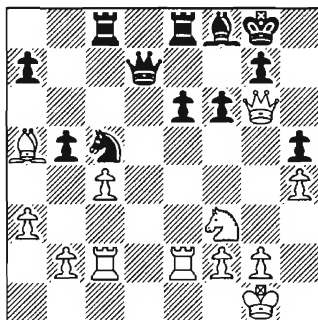


Diagram 29
The temperature rises

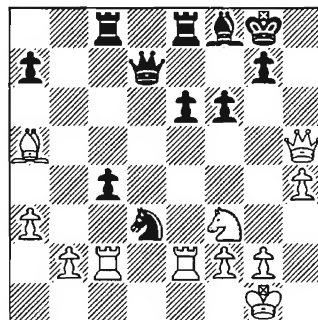


Diagram 30
Spot Black's threat(s)

31 Re4?

To prevent 31...Nf4, but Black has another idea. 31 Qg4 is better.

31...Rc5 32 Qg6 Rxa5 33 Rxc4 Ne5 34 Nxe5 Rxe5 35 Rc7

White may have experienced a glimmer of hope at this point – especially if he saw 35...Re1+ 36 Kh2 Bd6+?? (36...Qd6+ is still good enough) 37 g3 Bxc7 38 Rxc7 Qxc7 39 Qxe8+ with perpetual – but Bauer soon extinguishes it.

35...Bd6 36 g3 0-1

36 Rxd7 Re1 mate, of course.

Statistics

At the moment Black has scored about 60% after 6...Bf5.

Theoretical?

No.

Theoretical Status

Very good. White doesn't yet have the answer.

Game 5

□ E.Sutovsky ■ M.Carlsen

Rethymnon 2003

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 5 Nxe5 c6 6 Bd3

A somewhat awkward looking move, but White wants to prevent the

development of the queen's bishop.

6...Nd7 7 0-0

After 7 Nf3 I think Stuart Conquest showed the way in del Rio Angelis-Conquest, Istanbul 2003, with 7...N7f6 8 h3 (otherwise 8...Bg4) 8...Nb4 9 Bc4 Bf5, when 10 Ne5 e6 11 Na3 Bd6 12 0-0 h6 13 c3 Nbd5 14 Nc2 Qc7 was about equal. 7 Nxd7 Bxd7 (recently given the Mickey Adams' seal of approval) makes sense inasmuch as it prevents this manoeuvre, and after 8 0-0 g6 9 Re1 Bg7 10 c3 0-0 11 Bg5 Re8 12 Nd2 Qc8 something akin to a quiet line of the Kengis system arises. Stefan-son-Gausel, Aarhus 2003 continued thematically with 13 Nc4 (better than the previously played 13 Ne4) 13...Bf5 14 Be2 Qc7 15 Bf3 Rad8 16 Qb3 when White has a bind and is planning to increase the pressure with Rad1 and Bh4-g3. Black played the provocative 16...Be6 and White was indeed provoked: 17 Rxe6 fxe6 18 Re1 (Diagram 31)

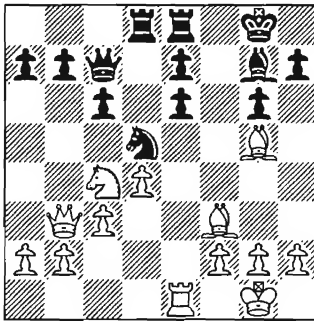


Diagram 31

A thematic exchange sacrifice

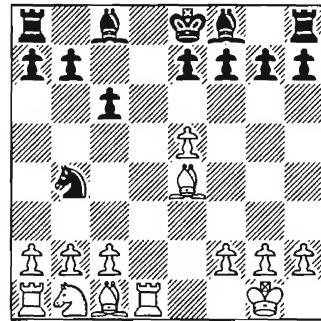


Diagram 32

An early queen trade



TIP: In the Kengis pawn structure Rx(B)e6 is always worth considering.

It is worth trying a few ways to free Black's position. The sacrifice isn't intended to quickly deliver mate or anything, rather to obtain a positional bind. It is surprisingly difficult to obtain lines for the rooks and/or defend the pawns on e6 and b7, while the pawn on e7 cuts Black's position in half and makes it very difficult to defend the king. I think White stands considerably better here, as the rest of the game demonstrates. Notice how little Black finds to do beyond creating more weaknesses as White regroupes his pieces: 18...b5 19 Ne5 Rf8 20 Bg4 Rd6 21 Nd3 h6 22 Bh4 Kh7 23 Bg3 e5 24 dxe5 Rdd8 25 Nc5 Qb6 26 Ne6 h5 27 Bxh5 gxh5 28 Qc2+ Kh6 29 Bh4 Bf6 30 exf6 exf6 31 Qf5 Rg8 32 Re5 1-0.

Returning to the opening, it seems to me that 14...b5 was the move.

15 Ne5? f6 wins a piece, while otherwise the thematic ...e7-e5 equalises easily, for example 15 Ne3 Nxe3 16 Bxe3 e5.

7...Nxe5

This was not essential: 7...g6 is a reasonable way to play, when 8 Nf3 is an inferior version of the note to Black's sixth move in Game 4 and 8 Nxd7 is Stefansson-Gausel.

8 dxe5 Nb4 9 Be4 Qxd1 10 Rxd1 (Diagram 32)

It's a little unusual for White to allow an endgame like this in the Alekhine – or at least to get anywhere when he does – and the idea that White could be seriously better will raise the hackles of any Alekhine fan. I suspect Sutovsky's choice of opening had less to do with objectivity and more to do with the fact that Carlsen is a 13-year-old tactical genius, and against that kind of opponent grandmasters tend to reckon that the sooner you can get the queens off and apply a bit of positional nous and experience the better.

10...f5

A good move, shifting the bishop from its ideal position and gaining both space and time (the bishop will need to move yet again to allow f2-f4).

11 a3 Na6

11...fxe4 12 axb4 was certainly conceivable and perhaps best. After the line Martin gives on chesspublishing.com, 12...g6 13 Be3 Bg7 14 Ra5 a6 15 Nc3 Bf5 16 h3 h5, Black has his own play. Indeed it is not so simple, e.g. 17 Rd4 (to collect the e-pawn) 17...b5 18 Bf4 e3, while Black has the idea of ...Kf7-e6.

12 Bf3 g6 13 Nd2

At first sight it would have been better to play 13 Be2 immediately. If White is going to play Bxa6 bxa6 at any point, then he wants to follow up with Nc3 since in that way he can both keep the black king away from the queenside and send the knight to c5 without having to go via b3 (where the bishop may capture it). 13 Be2 Nc7 14 Nd2 Be6 is the game, but it avoids the opportunity I think Black had at move 14, while 13 Be2 Be6 14 Bxa6 bxa6 15 Nc3 (-a4-c5) would worry me if I was Black. But this is a very difficult position and I am sure Sutovsky had a good reason for his move order. As it happens I was in Rethymon watching this game and Sutovsky thought for a very long time over this and subsequent moves up to move 20 or so; thereafter he rattled his moves out very confidently.

13...Be6 14 Be2 (Diagram 33)

TIP: In this kind of ending Black almost always castles queenside, where his king can defend the pawns and his rooks can get to the d-file and/or support a break on the kingside with ...g6-g5.

Call me a result merchant, but in the end Black loses this game because his king gets stuck on the kingside while White queens his a-pawn, and if it wasn't for the fact that I am a humble hack while Mas-



ter Carlsen may be the next world champion but two I would say 14...0-0-0 was downright mandatory here. As it is I merely put it forward as a suggestion. After that I don't think Black stands so badly. If White goes on with 15 Nf3 as he does in the game then 15...Rxd1+ 16 Bxd1 Bd5 17 Nd4 Bg7 18 f4 Rd8 19 Be3 Nc7 is far better than what happens. I can't think why Carlsen rejected this. It may have been 15 Bxa6 bxa6, for example 16 f4 Bh6 17 Rf1 Rd7, but it seems to me that this must be okay for Black thanks to his strong light-squared bishop.

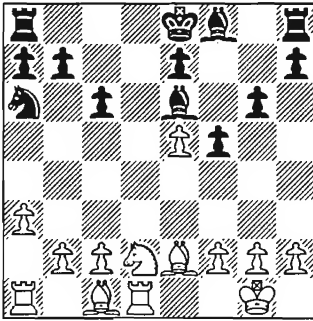


Diagram 33

How would you play?

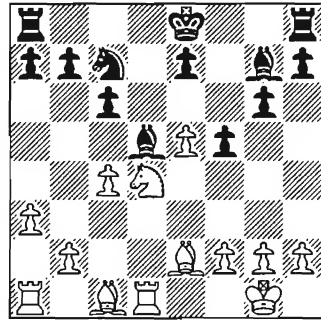


Diagram 34

The bishop is forced back

14...Nc7?! 15 Nf3 Bd5 16 Nd4 Bg7 17 c4! (Diagram 34)

This is the difference: White has the tempo to do this before he needs to defend his e-pawn, so that the bishop cannot come to e4 in view of f2-f3.

17...Bf7 18 f4

Now White has his ideal position and Black is really in trouble.

18...Ne6

I would still have preferred 18...0-0-0 myself, but by now I may be resulting it a little; no doubt Sutovsky would still have managed to create real problems for Black.

19 Nf3 Rd8 20 Be3 0-0 21 b4 a6 22 g3 Rxd1 23 Rxd1 Rd8 (Diagram 35)

Before Bb6 wins the queen's file, but the price Black has paid to exchange the rooks – his king and both bishops being out of play – is too much.

24 Rxd8+ Nxd8 25 Nd4

So simple. White wants to win the b-pawn with Nb3, Na5 and Bb6. Black is already gone.

25...Be8 26 Nb3 Bd7 27 Nc5 Be8 28 b5! (Diagram 36) 28...cxb5 29

cxb5 axb5 30 Bxb5 Bf8 31 Kf2 Kg7

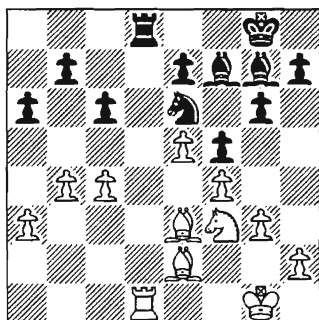


Diagram 35
Exchanges fail to help Black

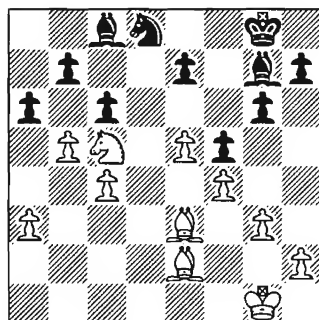


Diagram 36
The decisive break

Since 31...e6 loses to 32 Na4 Nc6 33 Nb6 Na7 34 Be8 followed by Nxc8 and Bd7, Black cannot get his king's bishop and king into the game and loses on the queenside.

32 Nd7 Kf7 33 a4 Bxd7 34 Bxd7 e6 35 Bb6 Be7 36 a5 g5 37 Ke2 h5 38 Bc8 h4 39 Bxb7 1-0

The a-pawn queens. An instructive game and possibly an important variation.

Statistics

White has scored 3½/4 with this particular idea (7 0-0) thus far.

Theoretical?

No.

Theoretical Status

Sutovsky's idea in this game is the only problem I see at the moment, but really there's too little theory yet to talk about theoretical status.

Game 6

□ Adams ■ Burkart

European Club Cup 1996

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 5 Nxe5 c6 6 c4 Nb4!? (Diagram 37)

A remarkable move, also made possible by 5...c6, which prevents Qa4+ from collecting a piece. There hasn't been a tremendous amount of experience with it yet, but such luminaries as Timman, Adams and Bauer have failed to show anything with White, so it deserves a look.

There's nothing at all wrong with 6...Nc7, which will probably lead to lines similar to those considered in the note to Black's sixth in game 4.

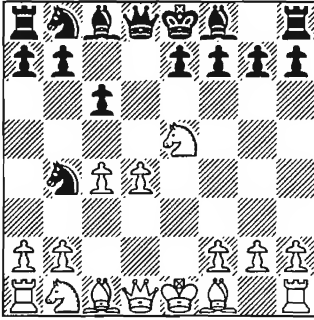


Diagram 37
Black invites 7 a3

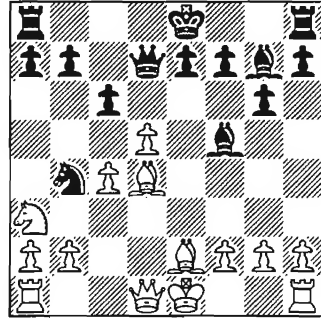


Diagram 38
White forces the issue

7 Be3

7 a3? loses to 7...Qxd4 8 Nxf7 Qe4+, and 7 Nd3 e5! is also very comfortable for Black (8 Nxe5 Qxd4), e.g. 8 dxe5 Bf5 9 Nxb4 Bxb4+ 10 Bd2 Qa5, when 11 f4? gives Black much too much play after something like 11...Na6 12 Nc3 0-0-0, while 11 Bxb4 Qxb4+ 12 Qd2 Na6 13 Be2 (13 a3 Qe7, again followed by ...0-0-0 and ...Nc5) 13...Rd8 14 Qc3 0-0 15 0-0 Rfe8 16 a3 Qc5 made no attempt to defend the e-pawn and acknowledged that Black was a little better (if anything) in Brodsky-Loeffler, Hamburg 2001.

7...Bf5 8 Na3

Thus far the opening has been a considerable success for Black. The a3-square is not where the knight wanted to be stabled, and Black's knight on b4 now feels much more secure. There is no real alternative, though, since 8 Nd3 e5 9 Nxb4+ Bxb4 10 Nc3 0-0 achieves zilch after 11 dxe5 Nd7 (Timman-Luther, Sweden 2002) or 11 Be2 cxd4 12 Qxd4 Na6 (Bauer-Loeffler Lausanne 2001).

8...Nd7 9 Nxd7

I imagine you know the answer to 9 Nd3 (or 9 Nf3) by now, namely 9...e5 10 dxe5 Qa5 which is unpleasant for White, but the text gets nowhere either.

9...Qxd7 10 Be2 g6

As Davies points out 10...e6 also looks jolly reasonable.

11 d5 Bg7 12 Bd4 (Diagram 38)

This is really White's only try for an advantage. Black has a simplifying reply but it does at least allow White to get rid of his spavined nag

on a3.

12...Nc2+ 13 Nxc2 Bxc2 14 Qd2 Bxd4 15 Qxd4 0-0 16 0-0 cxd5 17 cxd5 Rfd8

For someone with the Black pieces playing an opponent rated 300 points above him, Burkart isn't doing at all badly, but the text is a slight and instructive inaccuracy. Davies' 17...Qd6 was better since it would have enabled Black to meet 18 Rac1 with 18...e5!, after which the passed d-pawn is as much of a weakness as a strength, and Black avoids the pressure on the e-file that occurs in the game. Black is absolutely equal then, whereas in the game Adams maintains a little edge.

18 Rac1 Rac8 19 Bf3 b6

Black needs to attend to the a-pawn now, which gives White time to clamp down on the e-pawn.

20 Rfe1 (Diagram 39)

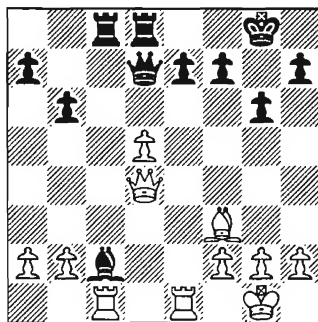


Diagram 39

White exerts pressure on the e-file

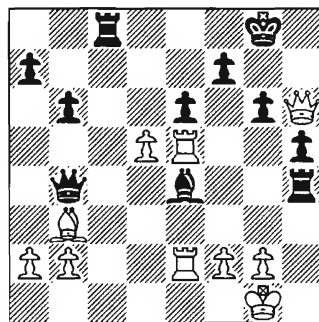


Diagram 40

The tension mounts...

20...Qd6 21 h4 Bf5 22 Rcd1

And not 22 h5?, when Black has 22...Rxc1 23 Rxc1 e5 again.

22...h5 23 Re3 Rd7 24 Rde1 Rdc7 25 Bd1

White improves his worst piece and in passing prevents ...Rc2, but he is plunging into complications which I think favour Black objectively. 25 g3 was a sensible alternative.

25...Rc4 26 Qd2 e6

Not 26...Rxb4 27 g3 and Rxe7, but now the position becomes sharp.

27 Re5 Rxb4

A bold move, but a good one. 27...Rc1 was certainly possible and ties White's forces down to a large extent since 28 Bb3? is met by 28...Qxe5. I don't know quite how White would have proceeded then, but 27...Rxb4 is better.

28 Bb3 Qb4

This is fine – in fact it forces a draw – but to be honest I can't see what Mickey Adams was going to play after 28...f6. According to one of those horrible machines, 29 Rxe6 simply loses to 29...Qh2+ 30 Kf1 Bg4 when defending is hopeless, for example 31 f3 Bxf3 32 Qf2 Bxg2+ 33 Ke2 Bf3+ 34 Ke3 Qf4+ and so forth, and there is no perpetual after 31 Re8+ Rxe8 32 Rxe8+ Kf7 33 d6+ Kxe8 since 34 Qe3+ is met by 34...Qe5. The heartless beast reckons that 29 Rxf5 Qh2+ 30 Kf1 Qh1+ 31 Ke2 Re4+ 32 Kf3 Qxe1 wins too since 33 Qh6 allows mate with 33...Qe2+, ...Qg4+, ...Qh4+ and ...Re1.

29 R5e3 Qh2+ 30 Kf1 Qh1+ 31 Ke2 Qxg2 is also grim, for example 32 dxe6 Bg4+ 33 Kd3 Rd8+ 34 Kc3 Qc6+ 35 Bc4 Qxc4+ 36 Kxc4 Rxd2 37 e7 Bd7+ 38 Kc3 Rxf2. This only seems to leave 29 g3 fxe5 30 gxh4 Kg7, but I can't see that White has an adequate continuation here.

29 Qh6 Be4

The only move; no doubt Black had been relying on it.

30 Re2! (Diagram 40)

30 Rd1 is weaker: 30...exd5 31 Bxd5 Bxd5 32 Rxd5 Re8 leaves Black a pawn up as after 33 Re5 the cool 33...Rh1+ 34 Kxh1 Qh4+ 35 Kg1 Rxe5 defends d8. After the text 30...exd5 31 Bxd5 Bxd5?? allows mate in three with 32 Re8+, although even here instead of 31...Bxd5 the continuation 31...Qd6! 32 Bxf7+ Kxf7 33 R2xe4 Rxe4 34 Rxe4 Kg8 seems to hang on.

But probably the most expedient course was to force a draw with 30...Rh1+ 31 Kxh1 Bxg2+ 32 Kxg2 (not 32 Kg1? Qg4 winning, for example 33 R/Qg5 Rc1+, or 33 f3 Bxf3+ 34 Kf1 Qh3+ 35 Ke1 Qh1+ 36 Kf2 Qg2+ 37 Ke1 Qg1+ 38 Kd2 Qc1+ winning the queen) 32...Qg4+ 33 Kf1 Qh3+, and White must allow perpetual since 34 Ke1 Qh1+ 35 Kd2 Qc1+ 36 Kd3 Qxh6 37 dxe6 Rd8+ 38 Kc2 fxe6 39 Rxe6 Kh8 loses the queen for inadequate compensation. Instead Burkart falters after his hitherto excellent play, either in time trouble or overlooking something very simple.

30...Rg4?? 31 dxe6 Rxg2+ 32 Kf1 Bd5 33 exf7+ 1-0

An interesting example of how an unexpectedly strong quiet move like 30 Re2, even if it isn't objectively so devastating, can cause a reasonable player to collapse.

Statistics

Black has scored 55% after 6...Nb4.

Theoretical?

Not really. Just remember to meet Nd3 with ...e7-e5 and you'll be fine.

Theoretical Status

Excellent. The ball is firmly in White's court and since the early play is quite forcing it won't be easy to find anything. I won't be surprised if 6 c4 comes to be seen as a mistake.

That ends our coverage of the Miles variation which, at the moment, is one of the very best ways for Black to play against the Main Line. White has to think for himself and as yet those thoughts haven't done terribly well against any of Black's options presented here. It is also possible to introduce the system by 4...c6, planning 5 Be2 dxe5. This cuts down White's options a bit since it reserves the possibility that Black's next move will be 5...Bg4, transposing to the system with 4...Bg4 and 5...c6 (see page 51 of Chapter 2). For example, if the Bd3 idea of Game 5 bothers Black, then this is an excellent device, since 5 Bd3 Bg4 6 h3 Bxf3 (or 6...Bh5, indeed) 7 Qxf3 dxe5 8 dxe5 e6 is not that good for White; the same is true of 5 Bc4 (or 5 g3). There are various drawbacks, though. First of all the handy 6...Nb4 of Game 6 is not available, so after 5 c4 Nc7 6 Be2 Black would be committed to the older lines mentioned in the notes to Game 4 (or to 6...Bg4 with a direct transposition to Chapter 2). Secondly, White retains the option of 5 Be2 dxe5 6 dxe5 when Black should avoid 6...Bf5 7 Nd4! (7...Bg6 8 e6, or 7...e6 8 Nxf5) in favour of 6...Bg4. 7 c4 Nb4 8 Qxd8+ is comfortable for Black, and so is 8 Qb3 Bxf3 9 gxf3 Qb6. However, I'm not too sure what Black's next trick is after 7 0-0. Of course he can transpose into the 4...Bg4/5...c6 system with 7...Bxf3. But he should beware of 7...e6 8 Ng5 which is an old variation of the 4...Bg4/5...c6 system considered unpleasant for Black (the queen is perfect on e2, the knight on g5 can come dangerously to e4 and d6 and White gains by delaying c2-c4 since the other knight can sometimes come to that square). Black would like to preserve the bishop with 8...Bf5 but 9 c4 is very strong (9...Nb4 10 Qxd8+ Kxd8 11 Nxf7+ Ke8 12 Nxe8 Nc2 13 g4 etc just loses, so the grim 9...Be7 10 cxd5 Bxg5 11 f4 Bh4 12 d6 is forced). Thirdly, White has the possibility of moving into a type of Exchange variation, as seen in the next game.

Game 7

□ Gallagher ■ Baburin

Isle of Man 2001

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 c6 (Diagram 41) 5 c4 Nc7 6 exd6 exd6 7 Nc3 Bg4 8 h3 Bh5 9 Be3 Be7 10 g4

An aggressive response, although, of course, White could play more quietly with play similar to Games 26 and 27.

10...Bg6 11 Qb3 Qc8

11...b6 12 Bg2 0-0 13 h4 h5 14 gxh5 Nxh5 15 Ng5 gave White an attack in McShane-Baburin, Kilkenny 1998, but since then Baburin has devised an entirely new plan, of which this move is only the beginning.

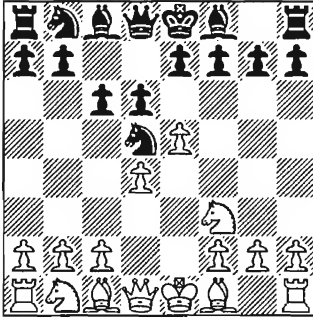


Diagram 41
A different move order

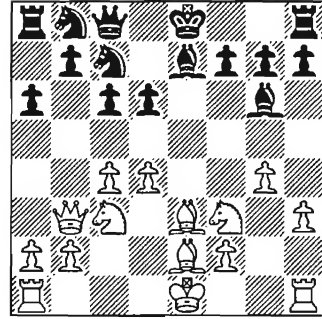


Diagram 42
A useful waiting move

12 Be2

With c6 not weakened 12 Bg2 has less point.

12...a6 (Diagram 42)

Black delays castling until he sees where White castles, and also prepares ...b7-b5.

13 Nd2

13 h4 has no point until Black castles on that side, so White prepares the push of his f-pawn.

13...Nd7 14 0-0-0

This doesn't work out at all well, though it's not clear it was bad yet. Flear's 14 f4 Bh4+ 15 Bf2 Bxf2 16 Kxf2 was perhaps preferable, but I don't think Black has much to worry about after 16...f5 (much better than 16...f6 as Black must keep control of the e4-square; otherwise a knight appears there with great force after 16...f6 17 f5 Bf7 18 Nde4). The key to the opening was to avoid premature castling and weakening the light squares with ...b7-b6.

14...d5 15 f4 f6

Since Black has had time to play ...d6-d5, controlling e4 that way, he no longer needs to play the weakening ...f7-f5.

16 f5 Bf7

White's driving the bishop into the attack without actually achieving much himself. I'm sure Joe Gallagher already had a bad feeling in his waters, but it's difficult to say what he should have done.

17 Kb1 b5 18 cxb5

18 c5 Nxc5 19 dxc5 d4 was worse.

18...axb5 19 Bf4 Nc5!? (Diagram 43)

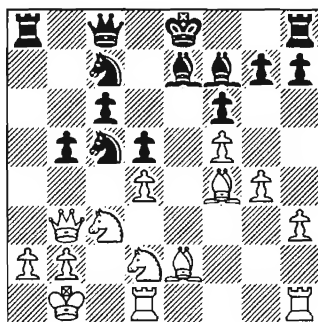


Diagram 43
A nice move

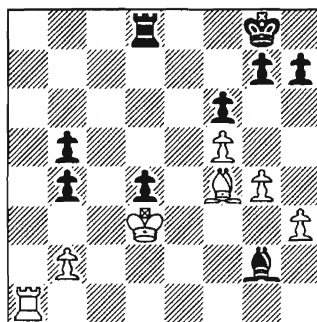


Diagram 44
Good bishop hunting

I doubt if this came as a shock to Gallagher, although it does to my computer. To be fair, the thing does try to fight back with 20 dxc5 d4 21 Nxb5, when 21...Bxb3 22 Nxc7+ Kf7 23 Nxb3 is dangerous for Black, and neither 21...Nxb5 22 Bc4 nor 21...cxb5 22 Bxb5+ Nxb5 23 Qxb5+ Kf8 are at all clear. Obviously White has an arduous defence ahead of him, but especially if conducted by a computer there isn't necessarily any reason to despair. I would have thought this was preferable to the game, though, in which White is lost within a few moves, although I am sure Gallagher appreciated that and his decision to steer clear of these complications must be respected.

20 Qc2 b4 21 Nb5!?

21 dxc5 bxc3 22 Qxc3 Rxa2 is scary (23 Kxa2 d4+), although 23 Bd6 keeps White fighting.

21...Nxb5 22 Bxb5 cxb5 23 dxc5 0-0

Gallagher's heroic measures have at least kept most of the lines closed, although the trouble is that White has no material solace for his difficulties.

24 Rhe1 Bxc5 25 Nb3 d4! 26 Qxc5

26 Nxc5 Bxa2+ 27 Kc1 b3 wins.

26...Bxb3 27 Qxc8 Bxa2+ 28 Kc1 Rfxc8+ 29 Kd2 Bd5 30 Kd3 Rd8 31 Ra1 Rxa1 32 Rxa1 Bg2 (Diagram 44)

The smoke has cleared and Black has a decisive advantage, although – as ever – Gallagher fights hard.

33 h4 Bh3 34 Rg1 h5 35 gxh5+ Bxf5 36 Kd2 Kf7 37 Rc1 Ke6 38 Rc5 Rh8 39 h6 gxh6 40 Rxb5 h5 41 Rb6+ Kf7 42 Rxb4 Rd8 43 Rb7+ Kg6 44 Rb6 Re8 45 Rd6 d3 46 Bg5 Rf8 47 Be3 Rc8 48 Bg5 Rc2+ 49 Ke3 Re2+ 50 Kf3 Be4+ 51 Kg3 Kf5 52 Rxf6+ Ke5 53 Rf2

This clearly wasn't in the programme and somewhere Baburin must

have been able to play more accurately. White has genuine drawing chances now, although I dare say both sides were short of time by this point.

53...Re1 54 Bf6+ Kd5 55 Kf4 Bg6 56 Bg5 Re4+ 57 Kg3 Rg4+ 58 Kh3

I don't know why Gallagher rejected the more natural 58 Kf3. Threatening mate by 58...Kd4 can then be dealt with by 59 Bf6+ and as far as I can see White has very good chances to hold. It might have had something to do with having seconds left to finish the game, of course – maybe h3 was just nearer the clock than f3.

58...Ke4 59 Bf6 Ke3 60 Rf1 Ke2 61 Rh1 Be4 0-1

62 Rh2+ Bg2+! wins at once.

Statistics

Hard to say: the transpositions blur the numbers.

Theoretical?

Not really, but the ideas in this game are important.

Theoretical Status

I don't think this Exchange-type system is too terrifying. I do think 5 Be2 dxe5 6 dxe5 is dangerous, unless of course Black is happy to transpose into the 4...Bg4/5...c6 system.

Game 8

□ Kallai ■ C.Horvath

Budapest 1990

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 5 Nxe5 Nd7 (Diagram 45)

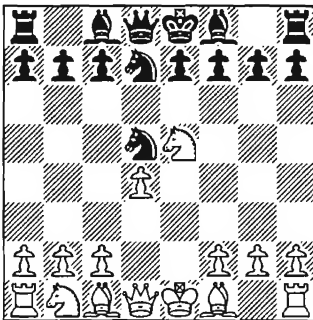


Diagram 45

Is 6 Nxf7 worth a try?

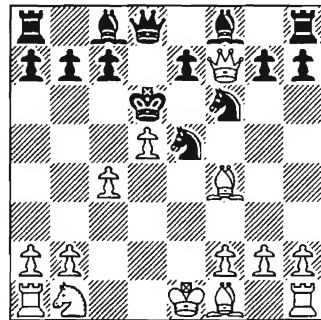


Diagram 46

An interesting position!

6 Nxf7 Kxf7 7 Qh5+ Ke6 8 c4

The main alternative is 8 g3, a move which Tal spent a fair time analysing against Larsen, but sadly not until after he had played 6 Bc4. The main line then is considered to be 8...b5 (to prevent c2-c4) 9 a4 (9 b3 b4 seems to be okay) 9...c6, but White has a powerful idea here in 10 Bh3+ (and not 10 axb5/Nc3 when Black can create a bolthole for the king on f7 by 10...g6) 10...Kd6 11 Nc3. The point of this is that 11 axb5 cxb5 12 Nc3 allows 12...N7f6, since Black's king has the c6-square, while now 11...N7f6 loses at once to 12 Bf4+ Nxf4 13 Qe5 mate. More subtly, 11...b4 12 Bf4+ Nxf4 13 Ne4+ Kc7 14 Qa5+ Nb6 15 Qe5+ elegantly forces Black to give up the queen by 15...Qd6, since 15...Kb7 16 Nc5 is mate. Black needs a different eleventh move, for example 11...e6 12 axb5 N7f6 13 Qe5+ Ke7 may be possible.

8...N5f6 9 d5+ Kd6 10 Qf7

10 Bf4+? e5 11 c5+ Ke7 12 Bg5 Qe8 leads nowhere. White can win his piece back with 10 c5+ Nxc5 11 Bf4+ Kd7 12 Bb5+ c6 13 dxc6 bxc6 14 Qxc5 since 14...axb5 15 Qxb5+ Ke6 16 Qc6+ wins the rook, but unfairly enough 14...Qb6! forces the exchange of queens and gives Black a very reasonable position. He will trade the light-squared bishops with ...Ba6 and anchor a knight on d5. 10 Qf5 Nc5 11 Bf4+ e5 12 Bxe5+ Ke7 (or 12 dxe6+ Kc6), 10 Qh3 Nc5 11 Qa3 e5 12 Be3 b6 13 b4 Ncd7 14 c5+ Ke7 15 Nc3 bxc5 16 bxc5 Kf7 17 Bc4 Nb6! and 10 Qe2 Nb8 11 Bf4+ Kd7 have all been tried without appearing to give adequate compensation.

10...Ne5 11 Bf4 (Diagram 46) 11...c5

The only defence to 12 c5+.

12 Nd2

12 dxc6? Qa5+ 13 Nc3 Kxc6 wins for Black at once as White's queen is trapped, but the major alternative is 12 Nc3. This forces 12...a6, and now refuted tries are 13 0-0-0 (with the idea of Re1) 13...g6! (threatening ...Bh6!) 14 Bxe5+ (14 Re1 Bh6!) 14...Kxe5 15 d6 Bh6+ 16 Kc2 Qe8 17 Rd5+ Nxd5 18 Qxd5+ Kf6 19 Ne4+ Kg7, and 13 b4 Qb6 14 bxc5+ (or 14 0-0-0 Qxb4 – 14...cxb4 is supposed to be a draw – 15 Kc2 Bf5+ 16 Bd3 Qxc4) 14...Qxc5 15 Rd1 Qa3! 16 Rd3 Qc1+!. For this reason 13 Rd1 has been suggested to improve on the first try, and 14 Rc1 (14...g5 15 Bg3 h5!) on the second, although in neither case has White carried much conviction.

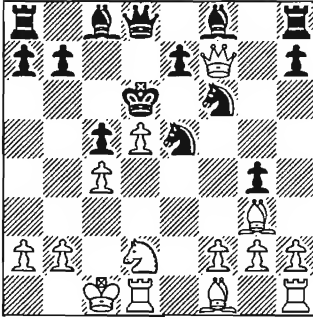
12...g5

White was threatening 13 Nf3, although another point of his knight move is revealed after 12...Qe8?? 13 Ne4+! etc.

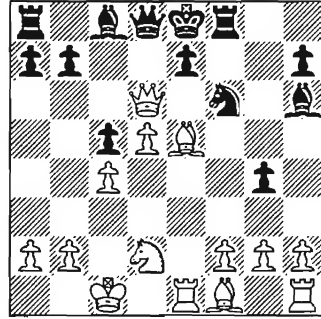
13 Bg3 g4

13...Bh6 14 Nf3 Rf8 15 Nxe5 enables White to win the queen back and stay a pawn ahead, even after 15...Qa5+ 16 Kd1 Rxf7 17 Nc6+.

14 0-0-0 (Diagram 47)

**Diagram 47**

How does Black deal with the pin?

**Diagram 48**

The bizarre events continue

Black cannot defend e5, but he has a resource...

14...Bh6

14...Rg8 15 Re1 Rg7 is much the same, but a little worse. 15...Rg5? 16 Bd3 Bh6 17 Kc2 is much worse.

15 Re1 Rf8 16 Bxe5+ Kd7 17 Qe6+ Ke8 18 Qd6 (Diagram 48)

A mildly fortunate resource for White in his turn, forcing a level ending. 18 Qxf6 Rxf6 19 Bxf6 Kf7 is unsound.

18...exd6 19 Bxf6+ Kd7 20 Bxd8 Kxd8 21 Bd3 Rxf2 22 Re2 Rxe2 23 Bxe2 Bd7 24 Bd3 ½-½

Statistics

Black has scored 50% after 6 Nxf7.

Theoretical?

Intensely. Black really has to know the variations given here after the sacrifice and, frankly, it's wise to have done a bit more analysis of one's own, as a book such as this can provide no more than a gallop through some of the lines.

Theoretical Status

10 Qf7 was the main line for many years, but it's looking as if White is the one trying to force equality. 8 g3 is far more worrying.

Game 9

□ Piza ■ Miroshnichenko

Komerčni Banka Open 1996

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 dxe5 5 Nxe5 Nd7 6 Nf3

6 Bc4 is best answered by van der Wiel's logical 6...Nxe5 7 dxe5 c6.

White really needs to play 8 Qf3 to prevent Black reaching easy equality after 8 0-0 Bf5 (or 8 Nc3 Be6), and now Black has 8...Qc7!, when neither 9 Bxd5 Qxe5+ 10 Be4 f5 nor 9 0-0 Qxe5 10 Nc3 Be6 is any good, but defending the e-pawn with 9 Bf4 runs into 9...g5 10 Bg3 h5, when van der Wiel's suggestion was 11 Nc3 Be6 12 h4. Here, however, Black has the very strong 12...Qa5, when 13 hxg5 Nxc3 14 Bxe6 Nd5+ wins material, so White is reduced to something miserable like 13 Bb3 g4 14 Qd3 Nxc3 15 Qxc3 Qxc3+ 16 bxc3 Bf5. Maybe White ought to play a different eleventh move, but he won't stand better, e.g. 11 h4 Bg4. Meanwhile 6 Nxd7 Bxd7 has no pretensions, for example 7 Bc4 Bf5 is equal.

6...c6 (Diagram 49)

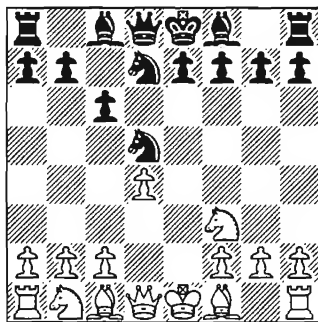


Diagram 49
A promising continuation?

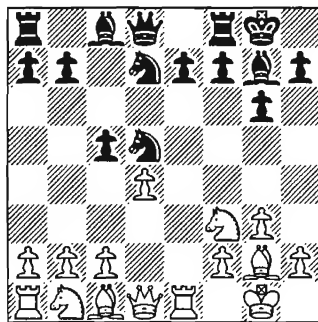


Diagram 50
Black is ready to contest the centre

6...e6 and ...c7-c5 has been much more popular, but the text has done better and – in my opinion – has a lot to commend it.

7 g3

After 7 c4 Nc7 8 Nc3 g6 9 Be2 Bg7 10 0-0 0-0 we would reach the old main line of the Miles variation (Game 4, note to Black's 6th move).

7...g6 8 Bg2 Bg7 9 0-0 0-0 10 Re1

The natural 10 c4 Nc7 11 Nc3 is inconveniently met by 11...Nb6, for example 12 Qe2 Be6 13 b3 Bg4 followed by ...Ne6.

10...c5 (Diagram 50) 11 dxc5

White has left it too late to drive the knight away from the centre, for example 11 c4 N5b6 12 b3 cxd4 13 Nxd4 Nc5 14 Bb2 Qd7 followed by ...Rd8 etc.

11...Nxc5 12 Nbd2

Not ideal, but by now 12 c4 Nb4 is out of the question, so the knight cannot be developed on its natural square. Perhaps 12 Qe2 was best.

12...Nb4 13 a3 Nc6 14 Ng5

A bit of a desperate measure, but ...Bf5 was a difficult threat to meet.
**14...Bf5 15 Nge4 Nxe4 16 Nxe4 Qxd1 17 Rxd1 Rad8 18 Rf1 Nd4
 19 c3 Nb3 20 Rb1 Nxc1 21 Rbxc1 b6**

Black is better; the remainder of the game is instructive, albeit outside our theme.

**22 f4 e5 23 fxe5 Bxe5 24 Rcd1 Kg7 25 Bf3 Rfe8 26 Rxd8 Rxd8 27
 Kg2 h6 28 Re1 Bb8 29 Re2 Be6 30 Rd2 Rxd2 31 Nxd2**

In principle this is an achievement for White, but Black's advantage is still considerable.

**31...f5 32 Bc6 Kf6 33 Nf3 g5 34 h3 Bc8 35 Ba8 h5 36 Nd4 a6 37
 Nc6 Bc7 38 Nb4 Ke5 39 Bf3 h4 40 gxh4 gxh4 41 Nd3+ Ke6 42 c4
 Bd8 43 c5 bxc5 44 Nxc5+ Ke5 45 Be2 a5 46 b4 Be7!**

An excellent move. Possibly White had been banking on 46...axb4? 47
 axb4 Kd4 48 Ba6 with a draw.

47 Nd3+

Now 47 Ba6 Bxa6 48 Nxa6 a4 49 Kf3 Bd6 traps the knight and wins.

**47...Kd4 48 bxa5 Ke3 49 Kf1 f4 50 Nf2 f3 51 Bb5 Bxa3 52 Kg1
 Bc5 53 Ng4+ Kf4+ 54 Kh2 Bb7 55 a6 Ba8**

A classical demonstration of the ability of the bishop to play on both wings – the a-pawn is almost irrelevant. Black is winning by now.

**56 Bd3 Kg5 57 Bf1 Ba7 58 Bd3 f2 59 Nxf2 Bxf2 60 Bf1 Bc6 61
 Bg2**

White cannot keep his bishop on the f1-a6 diagonal: Black plays
 ...Ba7, brings the king up to f2 and mates with ...Bb8.

**61...Bb5 62 Bb7 Bf1 63 Bc8 Kf4 64 Bb7 Ba7 65 Bc8 Kf3 66 Bb7+
 Kf2 67 Bc6 Bxa6 68 Bg2 Bb8+ 69 Kh1 Bc8**

Zugzwang again!

70 Bc6 Bxh3 0-1

A fine technical grind, of a type to gladden the heart of Tony Miles himself.

Statistics

White has managed 66% after 6 Nf3, but only 50% after 6...c6, although I haven't accounted for the transpositions to the Miles variation.

Theoretical?





Not really. It's worth trying to remember van der Wiel's cute sequence after 6 Bc4.

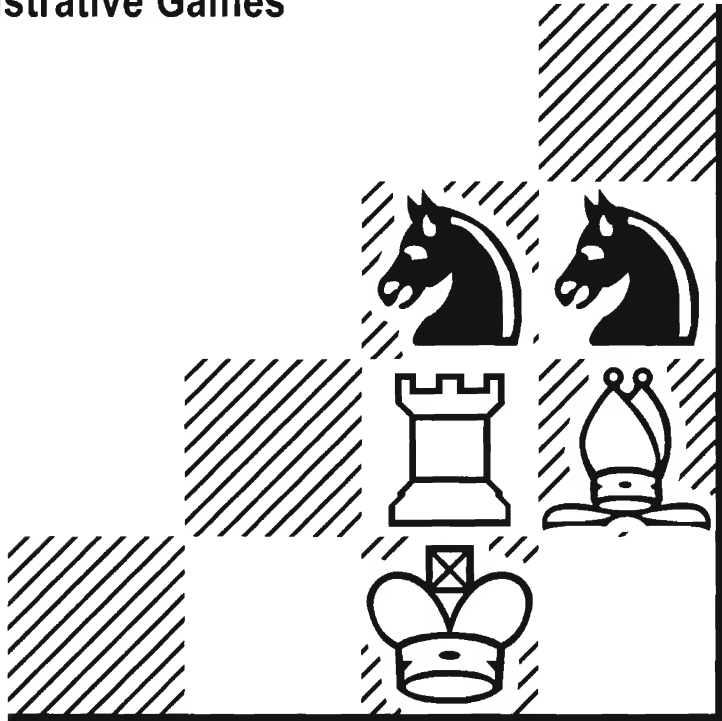
Theoretical Status

Not many games, but I doubt White has much better than transposing to the Miles system.

Chapter Two

Main Line with 4...Bg4

-  Introduction
-  Black Plays 5...e6
-  Black Plays 5...c6
-  Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Bg4 (Diagram 1)

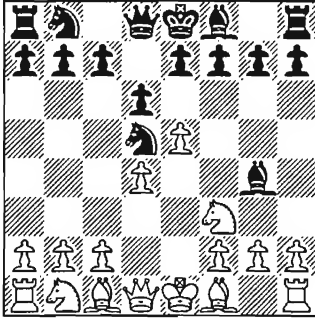


Diagram 1
An immediate pin

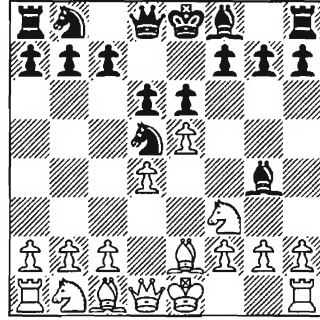


Diagram 2
The standard 5...e6

This, a very natural way to develop, is Black's oldest move and was the most common choice until the 1970's, when the rise of 4...g6 and then the modern 4...dxe5 systems reduced its popularity. Its most outstanding devotee was the great Alekhine player Vladimir Bagirov.

5 Be2

Other possibilities are covered in the notes to Game 10 but this is far the most common and natural continuation.

Black plays 5...e6

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 Be2 e6 (Diagram 2) 6 c4 Nb6 7 Nc3 Be7 8 h3

Believe it or not, this is a very controversial point. Whether White should play this or not depends on what system he proposes to employ in the coming moves. If he is going to opt for Bologan's idea set forth in Game 12, or for the 11 cxd5 idea in the notes to Game 10, then he needs to play h2-h3. If he intends to play the main line of Game 10 then he would like to get by without nudging the h-pawn if he can, for the reasons explained in that game. On the other hand, if h2-h3 is not included, then Black can try the line seen in Game 11. White therefore has to decide whether (a) Black is going to go for the main line anyway, whatever he does, in which case he should avoid h2-h3, or (b) whether he would rather play the main line even handicapped by having played h2-h3, or play against the system seen in Game 11.

8...Bh5

8...Bxf3 is not good: 9 Bxf3 Nc6 10 Bxc6 bxc6 leaves Black with no

compensation for his pawn weaknesses. 10 exd6 cxd6 11 d5 exd5 12 Bxd5 is also quite strong.

9 0-0

The alternative is 9 exd6 cxd6 and now either Bologan's 10 d5 (Game 12) or the older and still respectable 10 0-0. A variety of exd6 systems is dealt with in Game 13.

9...0-0

A bad idea would be 9...dxe5 10 Nxe5 Bxe2 11 Qxe2 Qxd4; White's initiative is too dangerous, e.g. 12 Rd1 Qc5 13 b4 Qxb4 14 Nb5.

10 Be3 d5

The natural 10...Nc6 is weak – White replies 11 exd6 cxd6 12 d5 and stands well for the reason explained in the notes to Game 11.

11 c5

Possible is 11 cxd5, which is considered in the notes to Game 10.

11...Bxf3

Black plays this at this moment partly because the position is now going to become closed and hence his knights will be the equal of White's bishops, partly because with the centre fixed g2-g4 is becoming more of an option for White, and partly because he wants to bring the knight to the active c4-square if White recaptures with the bishop.

12 gxf3!

This rather unnatural move is credited by Alburto to Karpov, although in fact it seems to have been first played by Nona Gaprindashvili, the perennial women's world champion of the sixties and seventies (and collected a question mark from commentators as perceptive as Eales and Williams, which shows just how unnatural it is). The older 12 Bxf3 Nc4 is also perfectly good and is seen in the notes to Game 10. With the text, though, White forces the b6-knight backwards and thus assures himself of a dominating spatial advantage.

12...Nc8 (Diagram 3)

The best square, on the way to the natural outpost on f5. This position has been the start for many hundreds of contests. From Black's point of view it will suit players who are temperamentally suited to prolonged trench warfare. His pieces are presently passive and disorganised; he has no obvious pawn break and for many moves will need to concentrate on restraining White's possibilities and on getting his pieces to sensible squares. There are compensations, though. White's weaknesses on the f-file are not a pretty sight, his queen's bishop is not a good piece at all, and f5 beckons a black knight. In addition, in the long term White's king's pawn cover is a little disrupted, and when the position does open up this can often be a source of counterplay. Black has not scored terribly well on the whole but that is no cause for despair – maestros such as Bagirov and Alburto made big scores from this position.

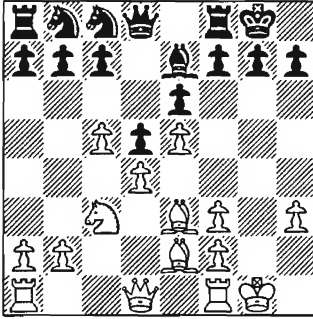


Diagram 3
A 'starting' position

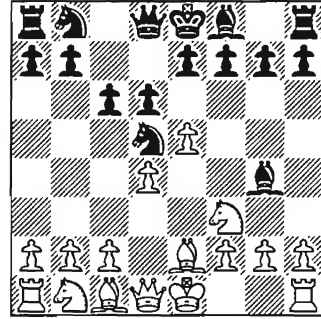


Diagram 4
An interesting alternative

Black plays 5...c6

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 Be2 c6 (Diagram 4)

With this move Black is aiming for a slightly different set-up to 5...e6. His immediate idea is to take the tension out of the centre with the sequence 6...Bxf3 7 Bxf3 dxe5 8 dxe5. To do this, of course, he first needs to cover the b7-square. The other way of doing this, 5...Nc6, has the drawback that after 6 0-0 Bxf3 7 Bxf3 dxe5 8 dxe5 e6 9 c4 Nb6 White can play 10 Bxc6+, ruining Black's pawns. White, in his turn, has two approaches against 5...c6 – he can either play 6 0-0 and allow Black's idea (Game 14) or he can use one of two ideas designed to prevent it, broadly Exchange-type systems (Game 15) or lunges with Ng5 (Game 16).

Rather than a conventional discussion of Black's ideas in the 6 0-0 variation, I think a 'How Good Is Your Chess' style feature is called for. We have the usual deal – cover the page and try and guess White's next move – and you are sitting alongside England's talented young IM, Adam Hunt. Your opponent is the English international master Colin Crouch. The game was played in the Portsmouth Open, 2003.

6 0-0

No points for this. I did say this was the move.

6...Bxf3 7 Bxf3

1 point.

7...dxe5 8 dxe5

1 point.

8...e6 9 Qe2

3 points. Lending extra support to the e-pawn and vacating the d-file for the f1-rook.

9...Nd7 10 c4

3 points. Driving Black's knight to an out-of-play position on b6.

10...Ne7 11 b3

3 points. Intending Ba3 or Bb2 to support the e-pawn.

11...Ng6 12 Bb2

1 point only. I gave you a hint last move.

12...Qc7 13 Bh5

5 points. Of course not 13 Re1?, which loses the e-pawn to 13...Bb4 (a very common square for the bishop in this line, by the way). But now White is ready to meet 13...Nxe5 with 14 f4(-f5), catching the black king in the centre.

Now add up your points:

17 points – Very good. Talented IM, perhaps even grandmaster.

Anything less than that – well, never mind. At least you aren't almost lost on move 13 with the white pieces, like Hunt is.

We can all agree that White's sequence has been very natural, and a number of grandmaster games have gone this way, but White might in fact be lost (and has been for a while, perhaps since 11 b3). Black can continue with 13...Ndx5 14 f4 Nd7 15 f5 0-0-0! when 16 fxc6 hxc6 wins the piece back with interest because of the pin of the h5-bishop against the h2-pawn, so White has to play 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 Qxe6, when 17...Bd6 with the idea of ...Nf4 is very strong for Black.

You may say that this is just a trap and proves nothing, and of course you're right. But at least now we know what Black wants – to attack the e-pawn with all his pieces, and to castle queenside and perhaps look for his play on the kingside.

And actually it's not just a trap – White's play has been anti-positional in various regards. Let's take another look:

9 Qe2

Not a good move. 9 Re1 is better. The rook does *not* belong on d1. It has nothing to do there except be exchanged for Black's rooks. One of the main advantages of having more space is that it tends to make your rooks better than your opponent's. Unless there is some concrete point to their being on an open file, they belong on files like the e-file here, where they can be moved forward and can then use their extra mobility along the open ranks the space advantage opens up. Meanwhile a single bishop on, say, c3 can keep even doubled rooks on the d-file at bay. Once it is realized that the rook should be on e1, obviously it should go there at once. The e-pawn needs defending and the rook needs to be on e1.



TIP: When planning your development the pieces which have no choice (like the rook in this case) should be developed first. The most flexible pieces (like the queen and queen's bishop here) should be left until later, when their best position may become apparent.

The queen may be good on e2, f3, g4 or h5. The queen's bishop may go to g5, f4, e3 or b2, or it may even be good where it is. The rook and queen's knight are the pieces whose best squares are already clear.

9...Nd7 10 c4

Another mistake. Black can never prevent c2-c4. The longer he has to plan his game not knowing when or whether his knight is to be dislodged, the harder it will be for him. There are two positional principles at work here. One, it is almost always to the advantage of the side which can release a particular tension to maintain that tension as long as possible unless some concrete advantage can be gained. Second, it is notoriously hard to plan one's game when one does not know where one's knights will be in five or ten moves' time. Black must be left in that unhappy state as long as possible.

10...Ne7 11 b3

This is a bad move largely because it misses the threat. It is high time to play something like 11 Bg4, so that at least White can play 12 f4 and not lose the king's pawn.

Illustrative Games

Game 10

□ Sanakoev ■ G.David

Correspondence 1988-92

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 Be2 e6 6 c4 Nb6 7 Nc3 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 h3 Bh5 10 Be3 d5 (Diagram 5)

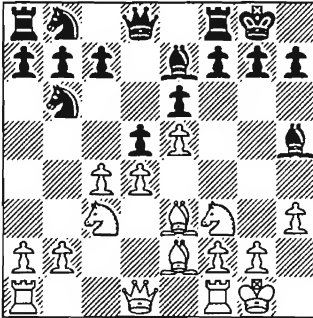


Diagram 5
Standard

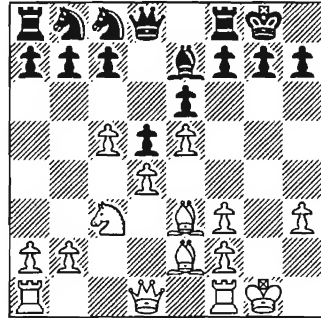


Diagram 6
Structures

11 c5

11 cxd5 is an alternative. Since 11...Nxd5 12 Qb3 Nb6 13 d5 is irritating, Black usually plays 11...exd5, and now White usually goes 12 g4 Bg6 13 Ne1 these days (the older 12 Ne1 Bxe2 13 Qxe2 is not so test-

ing). Black cannot stand by on the kingside; he ought to play 13...f6 14 f4, and now either the solid 14...f5 (Black should not play this because a pawn has arrived on f4 because White will establish a strong knight there, although, to be honest, if Black is going to push the f-pawn then he might have considered a different move at move 13, for example 13...Nc6, since White's plans surely include f2-f4 anyway), or the extremely ambitious 14...fxe5 15 dxe5 of King-Baburin, 4 NCL 2000, in which Black lost after huge complications, but not because of the opening.

11...Bxf3 12 gxf3

Also very possible is 12 Bxf3 Nc4 13 Bf4 Nc6 14 b3 N4a5. Black can then proceed with ...Qd7, ...f7-f6, ...Bxf6, ...Ne7 and ...Nac6 with a solid position, while ...b7-b6 at some point may also be useful.

12...Nc8 (Diagram 6)

It is worth considering this position for a moment. White's structure simply demands that Black send a knight to f5, and indeed his most basic manoeuvre is ...Bh4 and ...N8e7. It will usually be necessary to play ...g7-g6. Meanwhile ...Kh8 may well be necessary as a reply to Rg1 (otherwise White may have the tactical trick Qh5, attacking the bishop on h4 and so forcing the knight on e7 to move, either to f5, which will lose a pawn, or back to c8, when f4-f5 will be possible and may well be crushing). The other knight will evidently go to c6. Another tactical trick is ...Bxc5, dxc5 d4 regaining the piece. This needs careful timing; it may lead to the premature opening of the position and Black getting crushed down the central files, or it may be good. In the longer term, Black will need either to put his f-pawn on f6 or f5. In the latter case he will tend to follow up with a thrust of the g-pawn. To make this work he may well need to play ...Ne7-g8-h6-f7 and then ...Rg8 and perhaps even ...Rg8-g7 and ...Rag8 (or ...Qg8). Of course it's a shame to dissolve the weakness on f4, but if Black can activate his pieces White still has plenty of pawn weaknesses left, and this is really the only way of doing that. Black will not normally want to play actively on the queenside, but ...a7-a6 is usually a good idea. White should not be allowed to establish pawns on a5, b5 and c5, but exchanging a pair of pawns and even a pair of rooks on the a-file is not something Black usually objects to.

As for White, unless he manages to strike at once on the kingside he will normally play on the queenside, manoeuvring to try and keep Black's ideas from working before using his space advantage. Perhaps the main thing to avoid is losing patience and trading the king's bishop for a knight on f5 – unless it is either forced (a bad sign) or connected with an immediate plan this is seldom a good idea. Often White brings his knight round via e2 and g1 to f3; as a rule Black does not mind this capturing a bishop on h4.

This general talk is all very fine and large, of course, but in the meantime Black is undeveloped and is in a certain amount of danger of getting crushed, so he does need to be quite careful over the next few moves.

One deceptive point is that White is much better off if he has NOT played h2-h3. This square can be conveniently occupied by his major pieces. In general, for example, he can molest the h4-bishop by Qg4, which may prevent ...N8e7. If h3 is occupied, then Black can reply with ...h7-h5, and the queen cannot then maintain the attack on the bishop and ...N8e7-f5 can follow. If White can play Qh3, though, then ...h7-h5 merely creates a weakness and Black cannot bring much-needed reserves to the kingside. Here is a sample of how White needs this square to pursue his attack (**Diagram 7**).

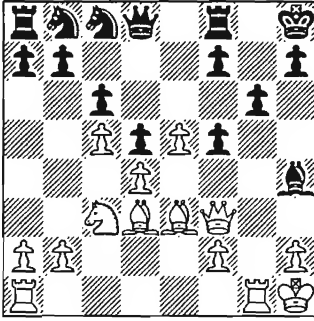


Diagram 7

Gone wrong for Black

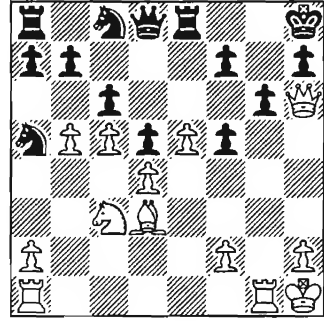


Diagram 8

Watch the h3-square

In this position, from Kobalija-Nalbandian, Moscow 1999, Black has not handled things well, and went down in flames after 17...Na6 18 Bxf5, since 18...gxf5 19 Bh6 Rg8 20 Rxcg8+ Qxcg8 21 Rg1 is unthinkable. If the pawn had been on h3, however, he could have fought with 17...f6!. Now if 18 e6 Re8 Black is in the game. If Nalbandian had tried that move in the game, though, 19 Qh3! would have been crushing, since 19...Bg5 20 f4 drops a piece, and 19...g5 20 Qxf5 is horrible. Here, in Ulybin-Morovic Fernandez, Las Palmas 1992 (**Diagram 8**), again White has gone for it with the front f-pawn, but this time Black has defended himself a little better. White could have played 23 Bxf5, but after 23...Ne7 24 Bd3 b6 there is no particular guarantee that his attack is going to succeed. Instead, ignoring the missing pawn, Ulybin brought everyone to the party with 23 Ne2 Ne7 24 Nf4 Rg8 25 Rg3 Qf8 26 Qh4 Re8 27 Rag1, and blasted through after 27... h6 28 e6 Kh7 29 exf7 Qxf7 30 Rh3 1-0. Impressive, but what if the pawn had been on h3? Then the final move of the game would not have been possible, and indeed Black would possibly even have stood better. Furthermore, earlier on, 24...Ng8 would have won White's queen, so he would perhaps have had to settle for 23 Bxf5 after all – the difference between an unclear game and Black being murdered in his bed.

I could give more examples but, actually, I think we need a slogan:



WARNING: If Black plays this variation when White has not thrown in h2-h3, he runs a grave risk of being mated.

Enough talk – let's see some moves. I'm going to assume that h2-h3 has been played.

13 f4 Nc6

Black prepares to meet f4-f5. The obvious method of doing this, 13...g6?, fails horribly to 14 f5! exf5 15 Nxd5 Qxd5 16 Bf3 and Bxb7. The text is the most popular but it is critical to my mind that Black can prevent this knight being driven to a5 in a move or two's time (see the next note). If he can't, then instead perhaps he should play 13...Bh4 (which has been tried) or indeed 13...f5 (also played).

14 b4 (Diagram 9)

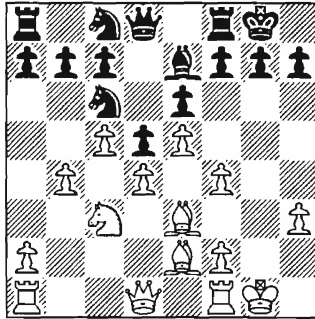


Diagram 9
Another white pawn advances

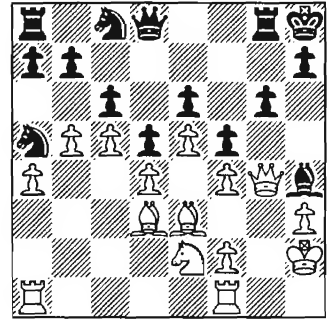


Diagram 10
What should White play now?

14 Bd3 g6 15 f5 is another sharp possibility which can be met by 15...exf5 16 Qf3 Bxc5 with complications, as in the game Chibur-danidze-Bagirov, Minsk 1983.

14...Bh4

Naturally 14...Nxb4 15 Rb1 and Rxb7 is not what Black wants, but 14...a6 is controversial. In principle Black would like to play this. The problem some perceive is 15 f5 exf5 16 f4. White is now threatening to win the d-pawn with 17 Bf3, and so the only move to defend it is the inglorious 16...Nb8 when, according to Alburt, White simply wins with 17 Bf3 c6 18 Qb3 followed by Nxd5, obtaining two pawns and a crushing pawn centre for the piece. Others – Bagirov, for example – clearly do not agree, and I believe they are right and that 14...a6 is best. Black can perfectly well play 15 f5 exf5 16 f4 Bh4! 17 Bf3 N6e7! (not 17...N8e7, when 18 Qb3 wins the d-pawn after all). With the pawn on h2 White simply continues with Bg2, Qf3 and Qh3, when Black is sorely pressed to stay afloat at all, but with the pawn on h3 the bishop is safe and Black can unravel gradually (the knight on c8

can be brought to life with ...b7-b6 or via e7 once Black has played ...c7-c6 and can move the e7 knight). White's idea would not have worked at all before b2-b4 and ...a7-a6 were inserted – Black could have met 14 f5 exf5 15 f4? with 15...Bxc5!. 14 f5 *has* been played, but with the idea of 14...exf5 15 Bf3. This, however, is well met by 15...Bg5 16 Nxd5 f4!, when either 17 Bc1 N8e7 18 Nxe7+ Qxe7 or 17 Bxf4 Bxf4 18 Nxf4 N8e7! (and a load of theory based around the game Aseev-Bagirov, Berlin 1990) have been found to be fine for Black.

15 b5

This has to be the critical move in my opinion. White has not done especially well after the alternatives Rb1, a2-a3 or Kh2, all of which lead to quieter play. Black should meet any of those with ...a7-a6; once he has secured his knight on c6 he is free to play the useful moves on the kingside. 15 f5 is also possible, when 15...exf5 16 b5! is still not good; either 15...N8e7 or perhaps 15...a6 is better.

15...Na5

This is not what Black wants to play, but the problem is that after 15...N6e7 16 Bd3 g6 (16...Ng6 17 f5 Nxe5 18 dxe5 d4 19 f6 is even worse, while 17...exf5 18 Bxf5 N8e7 19 Bd3 Qd7 20 Qg4 must also be better for White) 17 Qg4 his bishop is annoyingly en prise, and after 17...Nf5 18 Bxf5 exf5 19 Qf3 c6 20 bxc6 bxc6 21 Rfb1 the position opens up before he is ready to contest the open b-file.

16 Bd3 g6 17 Qg4

White might also try 17 f5 exf5 18 Qf3 c6 19 Bh6 Re8 20 Qf4 with attacking chances, as in Ulybin-Fernandez, above. In that game the pawn was on h2 and White's attack prevailed, but the present situation would be unclear.

17...Kh8

This was the recommendation of Bagirov himself, but in Macdonald-Palatnik, Hastings 1999, Black – doubtless warned by the present game (Sanakoev's collection of his games had just been published) – played 17...f5 (Bagirov had played 17...h5). This has a lot of merit in my opinion. If White is going to meet ...f7-f5 with exf6, far better that Black has not played ...Kh8 and ...Rg8 first, misplacing these two pieces. That game continued 18 Qg2 Ne7 19 Kh2 b6 20 c6 (if White wants to win he needs a different move to this; there are plenty conceivable) 20...a6 21 a4 Nc4, when White settled for the draw with 22 Ne2, allowing a complete block after 22...Nxe3 23 fxe3 a5 (some wood-shifting followed but already the draw is clear).

18 Kh2 Rg8 19 Ne2

A typical manoeuvre, planning Ng1-f3, annoying the h4-bishop and eyeing g5.

19...c6 20 a4 f5 (Diagram 10)

This had been the plan mapped out by Bagirov, but a surprise awaits Black.

21 exf6!

A really fine move. I can't think of another game in this variation where White has gone in for exposing his weaknesses on the f-file in this way. Sanakoev's explanation is disarmingly simple. With such a bishop as White's on e3 the game cannot be won. It must have diagonals opened for it and to do that White needs to play this move and then put his knight on e5.

21...Qxf6 22 Ng1 h5

Forced in order to save the bishop (Black cannot retreat the queen and bishop and allow h4-h5). White's plan depends on this point.

23 Qd1 Ne7 24 Nf3 Rad8 25 Rb1 Rg7 26 Qe2 Nc4

White's plan was founded on the poor placement of this knight, and sooner or later Black had to try this to get it into the game. The trouble is that White can ignore it for the moment and continue to strengthen his position.

27 Rb4 Nf5 28 Rg1 Qe7 29 bxc6 bxc6 30 Bxc4 dxc4 31 Ne5 Qe8 32 Qf3 Rc8

32...Nxd4? loses to 33 Bxd4 Rxd4 34 Nxc6+ Rxc6 35 Qxh5+ Kg7 36 Rxc6+ Qxc6 37 Rb7+ Kf6 38 Qe5 mate.

33 Rxc4 Bf6 34 Rb4 Bxe5

Black cannot tolerate this knight, but now White's dark-squared bishop catches a glimpse of the promised land – f6.

35 fxe5 Kh7 36 Qe4 Qd8?

Sanakoev points out that 36...Nxe3, with a hard fight still ahead – however White recaptures – was essential. 36 Bg5 wasn't possible to avoid this as Black could reply 36...a5 37 Rc4 (to defend the c-pawn) 37...Rb8, taking the b-file.

37 Bg5 (Diagram 11)

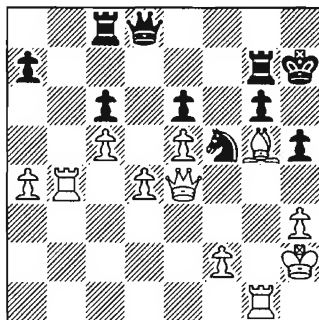


Diagram 11
The bishop comes alive

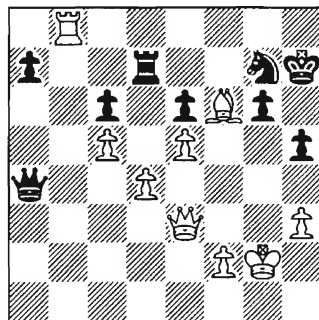


Diagram 12
Find the threat...

37...Qa5 38 Rgb1 Qa6 39 Kg2 Rd7 40 R1b3 Rf8 41 Bf6 Ng7 42 Rb8! Rxb8 43 Rxb8 Qxa4 44 Qe3! (Diagram 12)

The cruel threat of 45 Qh6+ Kxh6 46 Rh8 mate puts an end to any illusions Black might have had; some might have thought it better to allow this than to drag the game out as Black does.

44...g5 45 Bxg7 Rxc7 46 Qe4+ Rg6 47 Rb7+ Kh6 48 Qf3 g4 49 Qf4+ 1-0

A magnificent game. My notes were based on Sanakoev's in his excellent *World Champion at the Third Attempt*. White's plan here is not typical for this variation and depends upon Black's knight being driven to the queenside, but the game was too good to miss, and the specific opening sequence which allowed this is also important. This has been a very brief treatment of a complex variation, and if the reader wants to learn more, then playing through the games of Bagirov and/or Alburton from the position after move 12 is recommended.

Statistics

Black has scored 42% after 12...Nc8, and this drops to 31% if h2-h3 is not included. On the other hand Black does a lot better if he can avoid having his knight exiled early on to a5, hence the importance of the variation in the note to move 14.

Theoretical?

Not terribly, although it is wise to know a bit about the tricks connected with f5, b5, and such like round about moves 13-15.

Theoretical Status

Hard to say. Most masters think White is a little better with his extra space, but a plan or sequence which pins down that edge is not so easy to pinpoint. I would have thought Black would do well to find a move order which avoids the exact position after 15 b5, but Baburin, for example, seems happy enough to allow it.

Game 11

Borriss Baburin

Berlin 1992

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 Be2 e6 6 c4 Nb6 7 Nc3 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Be3

All as in previous games, but now Baburin deviates.

9...Nc6 (Diagram 13)

Black is now threatening 10...Bxf3 11 Bxf3 Nxc4 as well as 10...dxe5, so White has to take steps.

10 exd6 cxd6 11 d5

11 b3 d5 is the note to Black's tenth move in Game 13.

11...exd5

They used to play 11...Bxf3 12 Bxf3 Ne5 13 dxe6 fxe6 14 Bg4, but results were depressing and this position must be good for White.

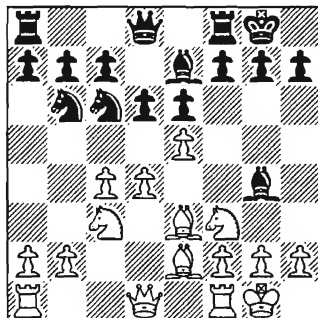


Diagram 13

Black holds back the d-pawn

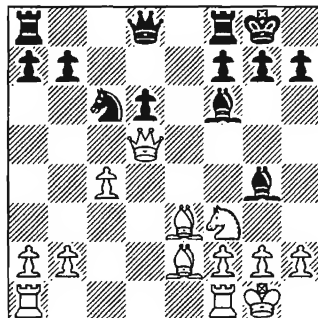


Diagram 14

Decision time for White

12 Nxd5

The alternative is 12 cxd5 Bxf3 13 Bxf3 Ne5 which is equal after 14 Be2 Nbc4 or 14 Bd4 Bf6 15 Be2 Nec4.

12...Nxd5 13 Qxd5 Bf6 (Diagram 14)

We have reached a potentially very important position, although not one that has been much played lately. If Black can equalise here then he can also get the main line in the more respectable version without h2-h3. It is important to note that if h2-h3 Bh5 has been played then this position is significantly worse for Black since his bishop on h5 is then en prise and he would have had to attend to that rather than start his counterplay with ...Bf6.

14 Qd2

A significant choice. White's alternatives are 14 Rab1, 14 Rfd1 and 14 Rad1. The last of these is not effective: 14 Rad1 Bxb2 15 Qb5 (15 Rdb1 Be6! equalizes at once) 15...Bf6 16 c5 d5 17 Qxb7 Rc8 was fine for Black in Liss-Schrentzel, Israel 1999, which continued 18 Bf4 Rfe8 19 Ba6 Re4 20 Bg3 Rb4 21 Bb5, and now 21...Na5 22 Qa6 Bxf3 23 gxf3 Rxc5 24 a4 Nc6 would have been very adequate for Black as 25 Bxc6 Rb6 regains the piece. A straight exchange of b-pawns like this is not likely to favour White, since it isolates his c-pawn to balance Black's d-pawn.

14 Rab1 allows either 14...Be6 15 Qb5 d5 with complications, or the more sedate 14...Qc8 (threatening ...Bf5) followed by 15...Rd8. 14 Rfd1 is well met by Hort's cunning 14...Rc8, whose tactical justification is 15 Qxd6 Qxd6 16 Rxd6 Bxb2 17 Rb1 Ba3, when 18 Rd3? fails to 18...Bf5. Black also prevents 15 Qd2 in view of 15...Bxf3 16 Bxf3 Ne5

with equality. Instead White does best to continue with 15 Rd2 Qa5 16 Qxa5 (16 Qxd6 is another ambush – 16...Bxf3 17 Bxf3 Rcd8 18 Qf4 Be5 wins) 16...Nxa5 17 Rc1 Be6 18 b3 d5 with rough equality, e.g. 19 c5 Nc6 20 Bg5 (20 Ng5? d4) 20...Bxg5 21 Nxg5 Rcd8 – perhaps White is a little better here, but how significantly so remains to be seen.

14...Qa5 15 Qxa5

A novelty. After the usual 15 Rfd1 the best move is 15...Rfd8!, intending to meet 16 Qc2 with 16...d5. Perhaps White's best line is then 16 h3 Be6 17 Ng5, but Black has 17...Bxg5 18 Bxg5 f6 19 Bf4 Qxd2 20 Rxd2 d5 when he is close to equality – although White has the two bishops, Black's pieces and pawns coordinate well.

15...Nxa5 16 Rab1 Rfe8

Not 16...Bf5? 17 Rbd1 Bxb2?? 18 Rd5 and White wins a piece.

17 b3 Nc6 18 Rbd1 Rad8

I don't quite know why Baburin didn't play 18...Bg5. After 19 h3 Bxe3 20 hxg4 Bc5, 19 Rxd6 Bxe3 20 fxe3 Rxe3 or 19 Bxg5 Rxe2 Black seems fine to me, although developing the final piece with the text is also natural.

19 h3 Bf5 20 g4 Bg6 21 Bd3

A thematic exchange to gain control of d5.

21...Bxd3 22 Rxd3 Nb4 23 Rd2 Bc3 24 Rdd1 b6 25 Nd4

White is slightly better. He might also have tried 24 a3 Nc2 25 Bc1, or here 25 Rd3 Nxe3 26 fxe3, when the game is to try and bring the knight to d5. The text aims for a tactical resolution, but Baburin is up to the task.

25...Nxa2 26 Nb5 Re7!

Naturally Black prefers to lose the weak d-pawn rather than the a-pawn.

27 Rxd6 Rxd6 28 Nxd6 Rd7 29 Nb5 Be5! 30 Re1

30 f4 Bb8 31 Re1 f6! is the same.

30...f6 31 f4 Bb8 32 Bxb6

This looks strong, but Baburin has it under control.

32...Kf7 33 Be3 a6

The knight has no good square – 34 Na3 Rd3, or 34 Nd4 Nb4 (or 34...Bxf4) 35 Re2 (and not 35 Rd1? Nc2 36 Kf2 Ba7 37 Nxc2 Rxd1 38 Bxa7 Rd2+) 35...Bxf4.

34 Re2 axb5 35 Rxa2 Rd3 ½-½

White might have considered playing on with 36 Kf2 Rxb3 37 c5 Ke6 but the position is becoming double-edged.

Statistics

Absolutely grim. From a small sample Black has scored 28%.

Theoretical?

Fairly. Black needs to play pretty accurately round about move 14-15.

Theoretical Status

Quite good, considering. White has not identified a method to obtain much of an edge. Nonetheless it is clear that Black does have to play significantly more accurately than White for a few moves in the teens before he can equalise. For this reason, and because this variation does have the potential to make Black's life in the main line a fair bit easier, I have given quite a lot of detail round about move 14.

Game 12

□ Bologan ■ S.Agdestein

Yerevan 1996

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 Be2 e6 6 c4 Nb6 7 Nc3 Be7
8 h3 Bh5

We've seen all this before, but now White deviates.

9 exd6 cxd6 10 d5 (Diagram 15)

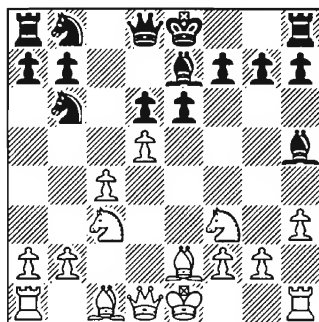


Diagram 15
White seeks early action

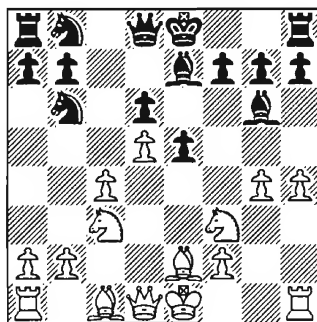


Diagram 16
A consistent advance

A difficult move to understand, although White's ideas with it are perfectly illustrated by the present game.

10...e5

The natural reply. If Black agrees to accept pawn weaknesses after dxe6 he must expect to be worse. In view of the next move one might get the idea of 10...Bxf3 11 Bxf3 e5, but White has 12 c5 dxc5 13 d6, winning material.

11 g4

This is the point of White's idea. Earlier Bologan had played 11 Be3

Bxf3 12 Bxf3 N8d7 13 Qe2 Rc8 14 b3 and won brilliantly, but Black should now play 14...0-0, after which 15 g4 Bg5 16 h4 Bxe3 is supposed to be a touch better for White, but looks quite playable to me. It's worth mentioning the clever 11 c5?! dxc5 12 g4 Bg6 13 Bb5+ N8d7 14 d6 Bh4 15 Bxd7+ Nxd7 16 Qa4. White is threatening to win a piece with g4-g5, but the cool 16...Qf6 defends. The idea of 11 g4 – of White's whole plan, in fact – is to ensure complete control of the e4-square. To achieve this it is necessary to prevent ...f7-f5, and also useful to cut out the possibility of Black's trading his bad bishop with ...Bxf3 and ...Bg5. White is committing himself to playing with his king either in the centre or in the open spaces on the queenside, but he relies upon his space advantage and the absence of pawn breaks to protect him. It is also possible to play more quietly with, for example, 11 0-0, but the text is the most common as well as the most thematic.

11...Bg6 12 h4 (Diagram 16)

An essential follow-up. White must be able to answer ...h5 with g4-g5.

12...h6

In my view this move is taking a grave strategic risk. The contours of a good knight against a bad bishop scenario can already be perceived – White has won various games in this line by exchanging bishops after Bd3, trading a pair of knights, capturing a knight on c5 with his queen's bishop and winning with a knight on e4 against the poor bishop on e7 – see Guseinov-Aliev, Baku 2001 for a particularly agonizing example. If Black opts for the alternative 12...h5 this cannot happen – in such an ending he will always at least have the h4-pawn to aim at and the possibility of breaking with ...f7-f6. The crucial positions arise after something such as 12...h5 13 g5 N8d7 14 Be3 Qc8 15 b3 Nc5 16 Rg1 Qf5, or 14 Bd3 Qc8 15 b3 Nc5 16 Bxg6 fxd6 17 Be3 0-0... theory has yet to pronounce finally about these.

13 Bd3

13 h5 Bh7 14 Bd3 is a mistake – Black has 14...Bxd3 15 Qxd3 Qc8 (forking a couple of pawns) 16 b3 Qxg4 17 Rg1 Qxh5 18 Rxd7. If Black had played this same way in the game ...Qh5 would not have captured a pawn and this final position, with a pawn still at h4, would have favoured White.

13...Qc8

Black didn't have to agree to his pawn structure being damaged like this, of course, but he hopes for f-file activity. The alternative 13...Bxd3 14 Qxd3 N8d7 15 Be3 Qc7 16 b3 Nc5 is also better for White.

14 Bxg6 fxd6 15 Nd2

Defending both pawns by way of the trick 15...Nxc4? 16 Qa4+.

15...0-0 16 b3 Rf4

This looks scary, especially in view of 17 f3 Qd8 (although this is by no means tragic for White), but Bologan now shows the real power of his idea.

17 g5! hxg5?!

It was surely better to avoid this and play either 17...h5 or perhaps 17...Qf5.

18 hxg5 Qf5

18...Bxg5? 19 Nde4 wins for White, but Black must win the g5-pawn in the long run. The problem is that this exposes his king and does nothing to combat the monster knight on e4.

19 Qe2 Na6 20 Nde4 (Diagram 17)

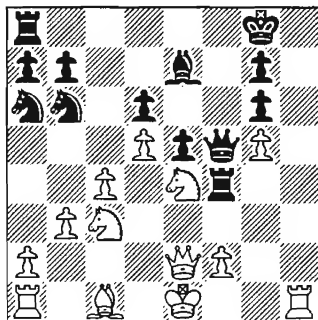


Diagram 17
The e4-square is crucial

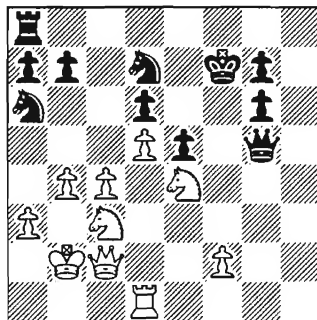


Diagram 18
A decisive knight return

20...Rf3 21 Be3

Simply developing. Black is positionally lost.

21...Nd7 22 0-0-0 Ndc5 23 Rh4 Rh3

Of course if 23...Nxe4 24 Nxe4 Nc5 White must continue with 25 Bxc5! dxc5 26 Rg1 with a horrid position for Black.

24 Ng3 Qd7 25 Rxh3 Qxh3 26 Qc2 Kf7 27 a3

White calmly prepares to drive away the black knights and re-enter the e4-square.

27...Qg4 28 b4 Bxg5 29 Bxg5

Not, of course, 29 bxc5 Bxe3+ 30 fxe3 Qxg3 31 cxd6 Qxe3+. White does not need these complications even if they are good for him.

29...Qxg5+ 30 Kb2 Nd7 31 Nge4 (Diagram 18) 31...Qh4

31...Qe7 32 Nb5 is no better, and 32 c5 is also very strong.

32 Nxd6+ Kg8 33 f3

Simply preparing Qxg6.

33...Qf6 34 c5 Qxf3 35 Qxg6 Qf2+ 36 Kb1 Nf8 37 Qh5 Qg2 38 Nce4 Ng6 39 Ng5 Qg3 40 Qh7+ Kf8 41 Ne6+ 1-0

41...Ke7 42 Qxg7 is mate. A striking game. White's guiding idea

shines through the play, but the calculation involved in making it look so simple against a player like Agdestein is always greater than it seems.

Statistics

White has scored 70% after 10 d5, although there haven't been that many games yet.

Theoretical?

Not immensely so.

Theoretical Status

This line is a problem for Black just now. Time will tell how the positions after 12...h5 work out.

Game 13

□ Skaslien ■ Caranzano

Correspondence 1988

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 Be2

It is possible to play 5 c4 Nb6 6 exd6 already, although after 6...cxd6 the game will most likely transpose to the present game. 5 c4 Nb6 6 d5!? is also a move, when Black's best reply is 6...e6, and after 7 exd6 for my money Black should brave the slight complications which arise after 7...Bxd6 8 Qd4 Bxf3 9 Qxg7 Rf8 10 gxf3, although the solid 7...Qxd6 is also possible. Finally, 5 h3 Bxf3 6 Qxf3 dxe5 7 dxe5 e6 is also met with occasionally, when Black should have an easy game with ...Nd7, ...c7-c6, ...Qc7 and perhaps ...h7-h5 (after Qg3), roughly as in Game 10, although White's pieces are less well placed here.

5...e6 6 c4 Nb6 7 0-0 Be7 8 exd6 cxd6 (Diagram 19)

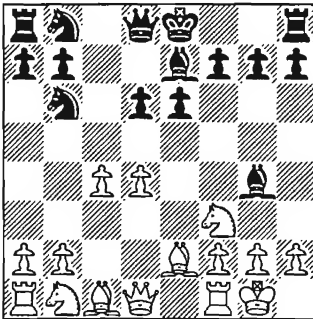


Diagram 19
A release of central tension

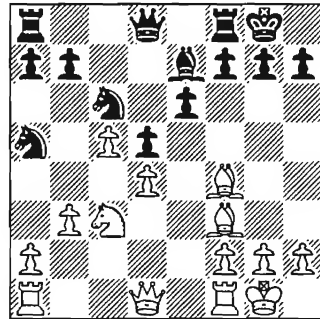


Diagram 20
The knight continues to roam

This is a slightly old-fashioned system, but still popular in amateur chess. It rather resembles the Exchange Variation (see Game 21).

9 Nc3

White has two other ways to play at this point. The first is 9 b3 (intended both to guard against ...Bxf3, Bxf3 Nxc4, although this is not necessary yet, and also to rule out the ...d6-d5, c4-c5 Bxf3, Bxf3 Nc4 sequence). Black can reply with 9...0-0 10 Nc3 Nc6 11 Be3 d5 12 c5 Nc8 when play will develop along lines very similar to Game 21. If h2-h3 Bh5 has been inserted then Black does well to meet c4-c5 with ...Bxf3 at once; otherwise g2-g4 might prove annoying. He can continue with ...Bf6 and ...N8e7-f5.

The second, similar, idea is 9 Nbd2 Nc6 10 b3 0-0 11 Bb2. This is also designed to take the sting out of Black's ...d6-d5 plan, this time by ensuring that White can recapture with a knight on f3, keeping his bishop on e2 to assist on the queenside, and also ensuring that d4 is stoutly defended. It is certainly possible to play 11...d5 anyway, but usually Black has preferred to wait a little with 11...Bf5 12 a3 a5 13 Re1 (White is a little short of a good waiting move) and only now 13...d5 14 c5 Nd7 with the idea of a quick ...e6-e5 (White is not so well placed to meet this with his knight on d2 instead of c3).

9...0-0 10 Be3

White can also try the quite cunning 10 Re1. This aims to save a tempo by ensuring that any ...Nc4 does not hit a bishop on e3, while also being useful after 10...Nc6 11 d5 exd5 12 Nxd5 Bxf3 13 Bxf3. Black's best reply is 10...a6, which is often a useful move in the 4...Bg4/e6 line. This threatens 11...Bxf3 and ...Nxc4 by giving the a8-rook a flight square, and will also be useful after ...d6-d5, c4-c5 by holding back White's b-pawn.

10...d5

10...Nc6 11 d5 leads to Game 11.

11 c5 Bxf3 12 Bxf3

12 gxf3 is possible, but by comparison with Game 10 White's pawn weaknesses appear in sharper relief, and Black has decent play after 12...Nc8.

12...Nc4 13 Bf4 Nc6 14 b3 N4a5 (Diagram 20) 15 Rb1 Bf6 16 Be3 b6 17 Na4

White might prefer 17 cxb6 here, when opinions differ about whether Black should recapture with queen or pawn. The former keeps control of b5, slightly more active pieces and the hope of a minority attack with ...a5-a4; the latter controls c5.

17...b5 18 Nc3 b4

A very solid plan, but if Black wants to play for a win he probably needs to permit an exchange of his b-pawn for White's c-pawn.

19 Na4 Ne7

A thematic rearrangement of the knights.

20 g4

To prevent ...Nf5.

20...g6

Addressing the threatened g4-g5.

21 Qd2 Nac6 (Diagram 21)

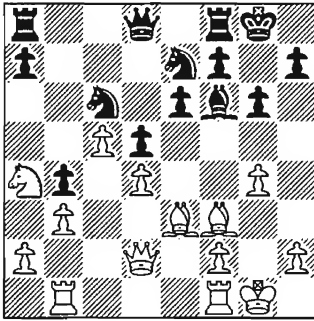


Diagram 21

The knights finally regroup

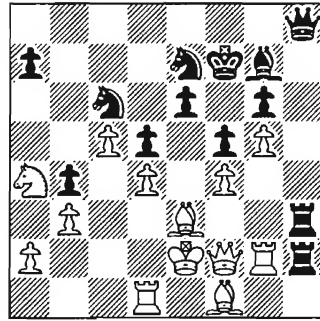


Diagram 22

The pressure mounts

22 Rbd1 Qd7 23 Bg2 Rfd8

A move designed to threaten ...e6-e5 and so elicit White's next, which is bad news for the e3-bishop.

24 f4 Bg7 25 Rf3 f6 26 Bh3 f5

Of course. The e-pawn's plight is regrettable, but Black cannot permit f4-f5.

27 g5 Kf7 28 Bf1 Rh8 29 h4 h6

Again Black cannot permit h4-h5-h6 followed by slow play on the queenside.

30 Rg3 hxc5 31 hxc5 Rh4 32 Kf2 Rax8 33 Kf3 Qc8 34 Qf2 Rh2 35 Rg2 R8h3+ 36 Ke2 Qh8 (Diagram 22) 37 Rd2 Qh5+ 38 Ke1 Rh1

Black is in total control, but White just manages to defend.

39 Rg3 R3h2 40 Rg2 Rh4 41 Rg1 R1h2 42 Rg2 R2h3 43 Rg3 Rh1 44 Rg1 R1h2 45 Rg2 R2h3 ½-½

Black is forced to concede that he cannot make progress. Not an exciting game, but an instructive and correct one from Black's viewpoint.

Statistics

Encouraging. Black has scored 52% after 11 c5.

Theoretical?

No. The ideas in this game are what Black needs to remember.

Theoretical Status

Sound.

Game 14

□ Gallagher ■ Crouch

4NCL 2002

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 Be2 c6 (Diagram 23)

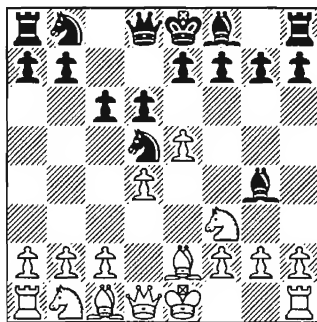


Diagram 23
A different approach

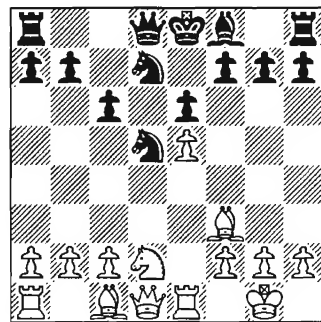


Diagram 24
Flexible

6 0-0

This used to be thought of as a mistake, giving Black what he wants, but now people are not so sure.

6...Bxf3

Black needs to make this exchange before playing ...dxe5, since 6...dxe5 7 Nxe5 Bxe2 8 Qxe2 Nd7 9 f4 is nice for White.

7 Bxf3 dxe5 8 dxe5 e6 9 Re1

White can develop in many other ways, for example b2-b3 and Bb2, but Black's immediate development scheme is going to be the same in any case.

9...Nd7 10 Nd2 (Diagram 24)

This set-up is the most popular and the most flexible for the reason I mentioned in the introduction: White's queen and queen's bishop are the pieces which have the most sensible options available to them, so White develops the others first.

10...Qc7

10...Be7 11 Nc4 0-0 is a less ambitious set-up, but perhaps safer.

11 Nc4 N7b6

The point of White's play is that the natural 11...b5? loses material to 12 Bxd5 cxd5 13 Nd6+ Bxd6 14 Qxd5! (14...exd5 15 exd6+ wins the queen back). Black might have tried to avoid this trick by developing the queen on b8, but the straightforward 12 Nd6+ Bxd6 13 exd6 Qxd6 14 b3 Qc5 15 c4 is also extremely dangerous.

12 Qe2

12 Nxb6 axb6 is less good.

12...Nxc4 13 Qxc4 0-0-0 14 a3 h6 15 b4 g5 16 g3 Bg7 17 Bb2 h5 (Diagram 25)

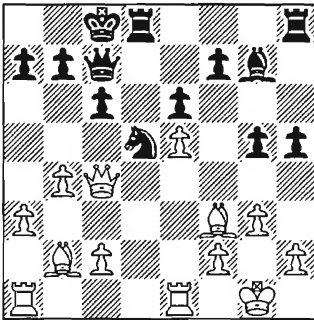


Diagram 25

Which king is the safer?

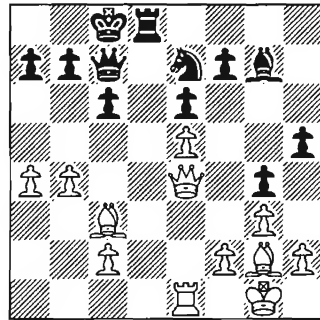


Diagram 26

A logical sidestep

18 Qe4 g4 19 Bg2 Ne7 20 a4

Black has played all the usual moves, and is ready for 20...Ng6, increasing the pressure on e5, but where he's actually going is not clear.

20...Rd2 21 Bc3 Rd7 22 Rad1 Rxd1 23 Rxd1 Rd8 24 Re1 (Diagram 26)

White wants to exchange exactly one pair of rooks so that he can subsequently bump Black's remaining rook with Bg5, when Black must abandon either the d-file by moving the rook sideways, or else the kingside pawns by moving it to d7. If Black had two rooks he could assign one to each task, while if both rooks were exchanged White would lack the firepower to exploit Black's slightly wobbly king.

24...Nd5 25 Bd2 Nb6 26 Bg5 Rh8 27 b5 cxb5 28 axb5 Nd7 29 Qa4 Nxe5 30 Bf4 Qc4 31 Qxa7 Qxb5 32 Qa2 (Diagram 27)

White has systematically opened up the enemy's defences for his bishop on g2 and now the threat of Rb1 forces evacuation.

32...Nf3+ 33 Bxf3 gxf3 34 Qa8+ Kd7 35 Rd1+ Ke7 36 Qa3+ (Diagram 28) 36...Kf6 37 Qxf3 Qc6 38 Qd3 Rc8 39 h4 Bf8 40 Qh7 Qxc2

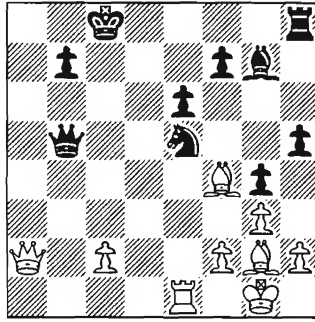


Diagram 27
The bishop pair dominates

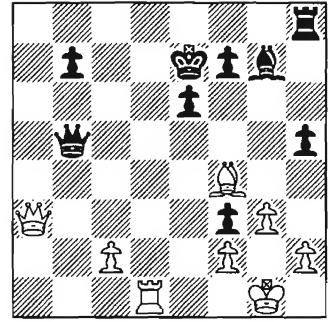


Diagram 28
Another forcing retreat

In the long run Black's king's position must be fatal, but Crouch must have been in time trouble to allow mate in two in this way.

41 Bg5+ Ke5 42 f4 mate 1-0

Statistics

Black has scored 47% after 8...e6, but this falls to 33% if White goes in for the line shown here, and there have been quite a few games.

Theoretical?

Not especially. It's worth recalling that winning the king's pawn with ...b7-b5 is often not a good idea, but apart from that Black's game is initially quite easy to play. The problem tends to come with finding active play in the middlegame.

Theoretical Status

Solid, but White does tend to retain a nagging edge at a higher level. However, White's game is not at all easy to handle when seeing Black's system for the first time, for example the great Botvinnik came up with the moderately ludicrous manoeuvre Bf3-g4-h3 in a game against Flohr at Nottingham 1936 (I assume – charitably – that wasn't preparation).

Game 15

□ Ferguson ■ Neil

Norwich 1994

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 Be2 c6 6 c4 (Diagram 29) 6...Nb6

6...Nc7 is also possible. The knight is quite well placed here if White goes in for exd6 exd6, with easy access to e6 after ...d6-d5, c4-c5

(unless perhaps White can arrange an early d4-d5), and so the main line is considered to be 7 0-0 Bxf3 8 exd6 Bxe2 9 dxc7 Bxd1 10 cxd8Q+ Kxd8 11 Rxd1 with something between equality and an edge for White.

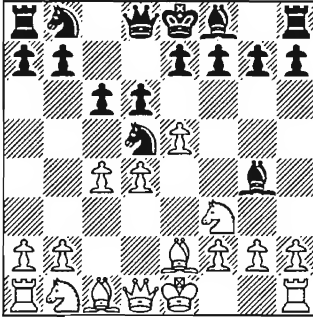


Diagram 29

White gains an early space advantage

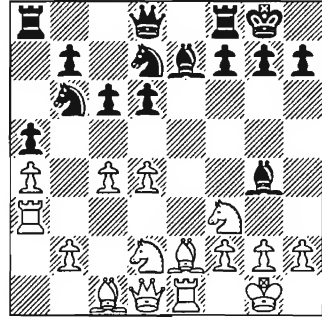


Diagram 30

An unconventional entry

7 Nbd2

7 Ng5 Bxe2 (this seems necessary as 7...Bf5 8 e6 fxe6 9 g4 Bg6 10 Bd3 Bxd3 11 Qxd3 is considered strong for White with the black knight exiled to b6) 8 Qxe2 dxe5 9 dxe5 e6 is similar to Game 14, although White is supposed to have benefited by retaining a knight instead of his king's bishop. Looking at what Gallagher did with his king's bishop, though, I'm not so sure about that. It is also possible to play 7 exd6 now, but the a2-a4 idea of this game is less strong while Black can still play ...Na6-b4, so usually White will wait a move.

7... N8d7

7...dxe5 8 Nxe5 Bf5 (or ...Be6) can be played and has actually been more popular, although Black has scored a miserable 28% and theory has always considered White better. On the other hand 7...dxe5 8 Nxe5 Bxe2 9 Qxe2 Qxd4 is a little brash: 10 Ndf3 Qc5 11 0-0 leaves White with too many attacking chances.

8 exd6

Black's pieces are not at all well placed for an Exchange-type position and, furthermore, White has a specific idea in mind. 8 0-0 (or 8 h3) Bxf3 9 Nxf3 dxe5 10 dxe5 e6 produces play similar to Game 14 – White has a knight rather than bishop on f3, which is nice for his e-pawn, but equally he no longer has the option of sending the knight to c4.

8 Ng5 is another dangerous idea. 8...Bf5, aiming for play similar to Game 16, seems to be in trouble owing to 9 g4 Bg6 10 e6 fxe6 11 Nxe6 Qc8 12 f4 with the simple intention of f4-f5 (the knight on d7 hampers

Black since it has to move before he can capture the pawn on e6 after, say, 12...Bf7 13 f5 Bxe6 14 fxe6, and it has no very convenient square – 14...Nf6 15 g5). On the other hand 8...Bxe2 9 e6! (a pulse-quickener if you've not seen it before) 9...f6 10 Qxe2 fxe5 11 Ne4 (11 exd7+ is not so pressing as Black can castle long and aim for a quick ...e7-e5) 11...Nf6 12 Nxe5 Nxc4! (trying to keep the piece is unwise because White plays Nf7 and g2-g4 and develops a huge attack) 13 0-0 Qa5 (14 Nf7 threatened) 14 Qxc4 h6 is reputedly okay for Black, although little tested.

8...exd6 9 0-0 Be7 10 Re1 0-0 11 a4 a5

Black does not care to ignore the threat of a4-a5, gaining vast amounts of space, although he might consider 11...d5 instead. After, for example, 12 c5 Nc8 13 b4 Bf6 14 Ra3 it remains to be seen whether White's early excursion on the queenside has achieved anything. After the text the outpost on b4 is of little use to Black with his knights where they are, and White's rook can be developed handily via a3...

12 Ra3 (Diagram 30) 12...Re8

12...Bh5 and 12...Qc7 are alternatives, but 12...Bf6 is well met by 13 Ne4.

13 Re3

A relatively popular position.

13...Nf6

Black has also tried 13...Nf8. The text is aimed at ruling out altogether the possibility of d4-d5. After 13...Nf8 14 Qb3 the threat of d4-d5 is thought to force the passive 14...Be6, leaving White with a comfortable edge after 15 Bd3.

14 h3 Bh5 15 b3 Qc7

A typical position in which White perhaps has a pull, although in this game he now conceives a grandiose plan to dominate the kingside which ought not to have succeeded. Instead he should play quietly, beginning with 16 Bd3 or Qc2, for instance.

16 Nh2 Bg6 17 Ndf1 Bf8 18 Bf3 Nbd7 19 g4 Rxe3 20 Rxe3 Re8?

Black has reorganized sensibly up to now, but this is too meek. Instead 20...d5 (**Diagram 31**) was called for.

TIP: The first reaction to a flank attack should always be to look for a counterblow in the centre.



Now 21 g5 Ne4 is no good, while after 21 c5 b6 White will soon regret over-committing his knights to the kingside, but otherwise ...Bd6-f4 is going to be annoying.

21 Rxe8 Nxe8 22 Qe1 f6

22...Nef6?? 23 g5 Nh5 24 Qd1 sees White win material, but now ...d6-d5 is ruled out and White is back on track.

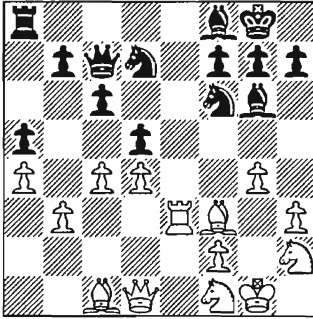


Diagram 31
The central counter-strike

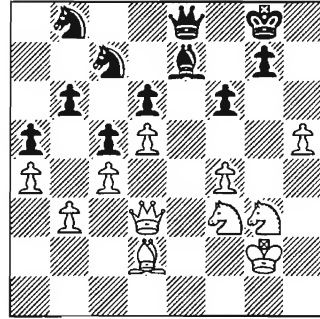


Diagram 32
White's knights have the last dance

23 Bd2 b6 24 Be4

Classic light-square strategy. White wants to trade bishops and push the d-pawn.

24...Bf7 25 Qe3 Nb8

A feeble move. 25...d5 was essential, and works tactically as 26 cxd5 cxd5 27 Bxd5? Bxd5 28 Qxe8 Bxb3 is poor for White. For this reason White's last move was possibly slightly inaccurate and needed to be replaced with something like 25 Ne3.

26 Qf3 Qd7 27 d5 c5

Now White has what he wants and stands considerably better. Black cannot leave the dominating bishop on e4 where it is, but if he trades it his remaining bishop is a sorry sight.

28 h4 Bg6 29 Bxg6 hxg6 30 Ng3 Qf7 31 Qe4 Nc7 32 f4

There was nothing wrong with an immediate 32 h5, but Ferguson prefers to rule out even the possibility of ...g6-g5 in reply.

32...Nd7 33 h5 gxh5 34 gxh5 Nb8 35 Kg2

Always the most unpleasant kind of move to face in such positions, especially in time trouble.

35...Qe8 36 Qd3 Be7 37 Nf3 (Diagram 32) 37...Nd7 38 Nh4 Nf8 39 Ngf5 Qd7 40 Qg3 Bd8 41 h6 Ne8 42 Ng7 1-0

42...Nxc7 43 Nf5 is devastating. Not a terribly accurate or theoretically significant game (though I did promise Mark Ferguson to mention that it won a best game prize), but this isn't that kind of line. However, what the game does illustrate well is the sort of passivity Black must avoid, and how to go about it.

Statistics

Not good: White has scored 63% after 7...N8d7.

Theoretical?

Not enormously; there is nothing which has to be learned in the exchange-type lines.

Theoretical Status

White seems to be a little better in the main variation, although a player who does not mind cramped positions and has an eye to manoeuvring for the counter-attack might like Black's game.

Game 16

□ Rogovski ■ Murashko

Alushta 2001

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 Be2 c6 6 Ng5 (Diagram 33)

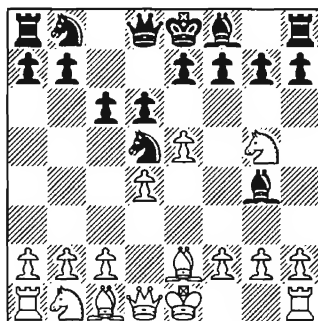


Diagram 33

White accepts the challenge

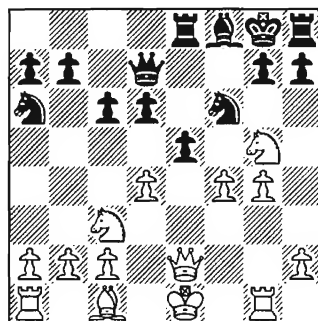


Diagram 34

Black's turn to attack

An unfashionable but quite dangerous move. White's point is that if 6...Bxe2 7 Qxe2 he has his queen on its ideal square and has retained his knight rather than his bishop, which he hopes will be to his advantage with the fixed pawn structure that arises, and will also prevent any accidents occurring to the e-pawn.

6...Bf5

For the reason just given Black normally prefers this move, which at least requires White to hike his queen to d3 or g4 if he wants to force the exchange of light-squared bishops by 7 Bd3 or 7 Bg4. Instead White normally prefers to sacrifice.

7 e6

After 7 Bd3 Bxd3 8 Qxd3 Black's best is probably 8...e6 rather than the older 8...h6, when 9 Ne4 is dangerous.

7...fxe6 8 g4

8 Bh5+ g6 9 g4 Bxc2 10 Qxc2 gxh5 11 Nxe6 Qd7 is similar but not quite so good for White.

8...Bg6 9 Bd3 Bxd3 10 Qxd3 Nf6

The h-pawn was attacked. 10...g6 11 Qf3 Nf6 is much the same as the text.

11 Nxe6 Qd7 12 Qe2 Kf7 13 Ng5+ Kg8 14 Rg1

White can draw with 14 Ne6, when Black hardly has better than 14...Kf7. White had various less effective alternatives in the last few moves, but Black's pieces will generally go to the same squares, save that ...h7-h5 may be possible if not discouraged by Rg1.

14...Na6 15 Nc3 Re8

15...Nc7 is possible, but after 16 Bf4 there isn't much difference.

16 f4

White has two better moves. One is 16 Ne6, when 16...Kf7 17 Nxf8 Rhxf8 18 g5 Nd5 19 Nxd5 cxd5 20 Qh5+ is probably a little better for White. The other is 16 Bf4, when 16...Nc7 17 0-0-0 Ncd5 18 Nxd5 Nxd5 19 Bg3 e6 20 Rde1 is definitely a bit better for White. 16 Bf4 e5 17 dxe5 h6 18 Nge4 Nxe4 19 Nxe4 Qf7 20 Bg3 dxe5 has been proposed, although White still looks a little better to me after 21 a3.

16...e5!? (Diagram 34)

A bold breakthrough.

17 dxe5 dxe5 18 f5

18 fxe5 was the critical move. Clearly Black has dangerous play after something like 18...Bc5, but only future tests will tell whether it's enough; e5-e6 might be an important resource.

18...h5!

Black must play with all his pieces, even though he is obviously taking a risk opening the g-file.

19 h3

More thematic was 19 gxh5, but one can see why White might not have liked 19...Bc5 20 Rg2.

19...hgx4 20 hxg4 Bc5 21 Be3

Now Black is going to be better. It was more challenging to move the rook but White is already struggling for equality.

21...Bxe3 22 Qxe3 Nb4 23 Qf2

23 Qe2 was better. White must have underestimated Black's next.

23...Qd4 24 Rc1

White could not save the g-pawn in view of the fact that 24 Qxd4

exd4+ drops a piece or so.

24...Nxb4 25 Qg3 Qe3+ 26 Qxe3 Nxe3 27 f6 gxf6 28 Nge4+ Kf8 29 Nxf6 Nexc2+

Simplest was 29...Rh2 30 Nxe8 Nbxc2+ 31 Rxc2 Nxc2+ 32 Kd1 Ne3+ 33 Kc1 Kxe8 34 Re1 Ng4 35 Re4 Rg2 and Black stays two pawns ahead and wins.

30 Ke2 Nd4+ 31 Ke3 Rh3+ 32 Ke4 Rh4+

Fritz's cool 32...Re7 33 Rcf1 Nd3 may still win, but I imagine the players were in time trouble, and Black has already made the psychological error of driving the king up the board to become active in the event of any simplification.

33 Rg4 Rxb4+ 34 Nxb4 Ke7 35 a3 Na6 36 Kxe5 Rd8 37 Rh1 Nf3+ 38 Kf4 Rf8+ 39 Ke3 Ng5 40 Rh5 ½-½

Black could certainly have tortured his opponent a little longer, but he was no doubt happy to draw against a higher-rated player.

Statistics

White has scored 60% after 6 Ng5.

Theoretical?

A little. Black is treading a narrow path with the king on g8 and the rook on h8.




Theoretical Status

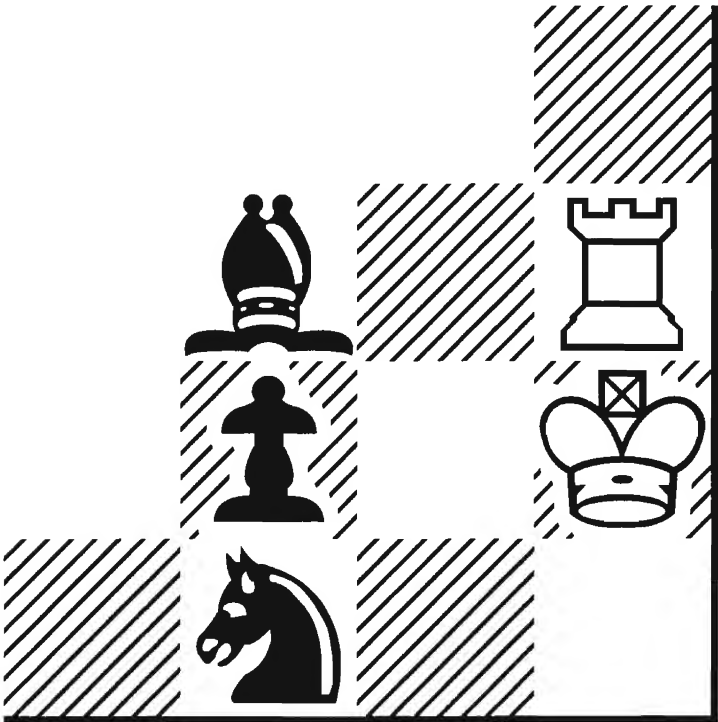
Black's having a little trouble at the moment. He needs to do better round about move 16, but below international level the line should remain quite playable.

With 5...c6 as a whole Black has scored 42%. Each of the three lines shown here is presently giving Black a headache, and the system is out of fashion after a period in the sun during the late eighties and early nineties.

Chapter Three

Main Line with 4...g6/4...Nc6

-  Black Plays 4...g6
-  Black Plays 4...Nc6
-  Illustrative Games



Black Plays 4...g6

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 g6 (Diagram 1)

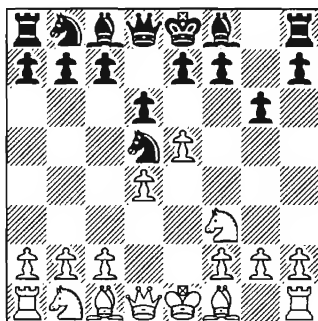


Diagram 1

Black prepares to hit e5

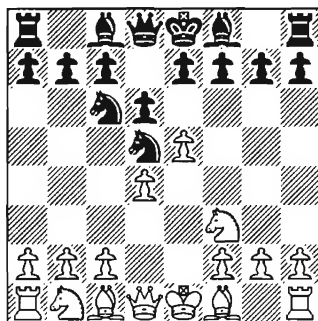


Diagram 2

Risky business

This is a very logical continuation which came into the picture in the 1960's and was subsequently the particular baby of the great Russian/American Alekhine devotee, Lev Alburt. Black intends to assault e5 with his fianchettoed bishop. If White succeeds in maintaining this point the bishop is in danger of being shut out of the game, so play can often become sharp as Black tries to break White's grip. In fact some of the crucial variations are more or less pure tactics.

5 Bc4

Almost universal now. 5 c4 Nb6 will merely transpose to a ...cxd6 Exchange variation, while the older 5 Ng5 c6 is ineffective, for example 6 Qf3 f6 7 e6 Qa5+ 8 Bd2 Qb6, or 6 f4 Bg7 – White's f2-f4 plan is less effective if he hasn't provoked ...d6-d5 or ...e7-e6 as he does in Game 17. 5 Ng5 Bg7?? 6 Qf3 is, however, to be avoided.

5...Nb6

5...c6 is also playable and was dealt with in Chapter 1, since it is basically a possible introduction to the Kengis System.

6 Bb3 Bg7

This is the modern starting point. White has a choice of three methods: 7 Ng5 (Game 17), which aims at establishing his centre with f2-f4, 7 a4 (Game 18) which aims, by forcing ...a7-a5, to improve White's chances in the other variations, and 7 Qe2 (Game 19), which aims to develop and maintain the e5-pawn with pieces rather than pawns. Of course simply castling is also possible, but 7 0-0 0-0 8 Re1 Bg4 9 h3 Bxf3 10 Qxf3 Nc6, for example, is already nice for Black – White's play looks logical, but he needs a more specific plan to maintain his centre.

Black Plays 4...Nc6

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Nc6 (Diagram 2)

4...Nc6 is a specialist's move. Any theoretical manual will tell you it's dubious. But there are players, notably Jurgens Fleck and Haakert from Germany, who have played it a lot and have achieved excellent results with it – in fact if either has ever lost in the main variation (after 6...fxe6) over the board then neither the database nor their own extensive article reveals the fact.

The reason is that this variation leads not just to sharp play but to very unusual positions. In all probability, if White wants an advantage he has to go in for 5 c4 Nb6 6 e6 fxe6. White takes advantage of the knight on c6 (6...Bxe6?? 7 d5) to damage Black's kingside structure and entomb the bishop on c8. This line stems from the earliest days of Alekhine's Defence. It has always been supposed to be good for White, but it remains today a minefield where even strong White players fear to tread.

Before we get on to that, however, let us consider what other approach White could take. Really there are two. The first is to transpose into some kind of Exchange variation. For example, White could play 5 c4 Nb6 6 exd6 exd6 (6...cxd6 7 d5 Ne5 8 Nd4 is not such a good idea, but 6...Bg4!? is an amusing gambit). White can then simply proceed as in Chapter 5 with 7 Be2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0. Alternatively, he can go in for 7 d5 Ne5 8 Nd4. Perhaps Black should not let this go unchallenged, but instead reply 8...c5 9 dxc6 Nxc6, when his slightly better development will allow him to get in ...d6-d5 and equalise.

Still on the same theme, White can be a bit more cunning and try 5 c4 Nb6 6 Nc3, delaying the exchange for a moment. Black should simply proceed with 6...Bg4. If White now maintains the tension with 7 Be2 he is beginning to be at risk of either 7...Bxf3 8 Bxf3 dxe5, or 7...dxe5 8 d5 Bxf3 9 Bxf3 Nd4, which forces unexplored gambit play on White, so probably he will usually prefer 7 exd6 exd6, and now the game is almost certain to transpose to Chapter 5. 8 Be2 Be7 9 d5 Bxf3 10 Bxf3 Ne5 11 Be2 is also possible and is supposed to give White a slight advantage, although Black's plan of ...Bf6, ...a7-a5, ...Ned7-c5, ...Re8 and so on gives him a very solid position. It's not every day you see a 2500+ rated Russian teenager fall for Legal's Legacy, albeit with a modern twist, so I can't resist quickly showing the game Zhenkin-Dyachkov, Orel 1996, which also illustrates why 7...cxd6 may be doubtful. After that move this continued 8 Be3 e6 9 h3 Bh5 10 d5 exd5 11 cxd5 Ne5 12 Bb5+ Nbd7? (12...Ned7 was presumably forced) 13 Nxe5!! Bxd1 14 Bxd7+ Ke7 15 Nc6+! (the twist) 15...bxc6 16 dxc6 (threatening Nd5 mate) 16...Qa5 17 Rxd1 Rd8 (Zhenkin does not comment on this; obviously Black has other ways of staggering on, but he is in dire straits in any case) 18 b4 Qxb4 19 0-0 Qxc3 20 Bd4 Qc4 21 Rfe1+ Qe6 22 Bxe6 fxe6 23 Rb1 and White won.

Alternatively, White sometimes tries 5 Bb5. The simplest approach then is 5...a6 6 Bxc6+ bxc6. 5 Bb5 is quite frequently chosen by grandmasters who don't fancy a theoretical debate on the territory of lesser opponents, but even so it's hard to believe White can claim any advantage after giving up his better bishop and strengthening Black's centre like this. Black usually develops with ...Bg4, ...e7-e6, ...Be7, ...0-0, ...Nb6 (in reply to c2-c4). If circumstances then allow him to force exd6 cxd6, uncrumpling his pawns (perhaps with ...Nd7 if White has foolishly developed his bishop on e3), all well and good. Otherwise he can consider ...a5-a4 (be careful, though, of ...a7-a5 being met with a2-a4 and the a-pawn dropping off later; Black must be in a position to meet a2-a4 with some concrete operation), or ...d6-d5 followed by ...c7-c5 and/or ...f7-f6 to dismantle White's centre. There's not much theory on these variations and Black can develop all his pieces without any immediate problems, so I haven't given an illustrative game.

5 Bc4 Nb6 6 Bb5 a6 (6...Bd7 looks like a plausible kind of move to me, though it hasn't been tried) leads to a similar game – White claims to have gained by driving the knight from the centre first, while Black says he's gained a tempo because White will play c2-c4 anyway and the knight won't be en prise. Black should, however, give 5...dxe5 6 Nxe5 Nxe5 7 dxe5 Nb6?? 8 Bxf7+ a miss, although 7...c6 followed by ...Be6 and ...Nc7 is reasonable.

The reason why White is under pressure immediately after 4...Nc6 is that a move like 5 Be2 is met by 5...dxe5 6 Nxe5 Nxe5 7 dxe5 Bf5. Once a pair of minor pieces has been exchanged and he has activated his queen's bishop this structure is comfortable for Black (he should play ...e7-e6 and not ...g7-g6), especially if he can also exchange queens (White's e-pawn can easily prove difficult to defend). On the other hand 5 Be2 dxe5 6 dxe5 Bf5 is even less desirable since Black can already consider ...Ndb4 with annoying threats against c2.

In short, 4...Nc6 would be what they were all playing if it were not for the reputation of the pawn sacrifice proposed by Rubinstein in 1925.

Illustrative Games

Game 17

□ Gdanski ■ Marinkovic

Biel 1989

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 g6 5 Bc4 Nb6 6 Bb3 Bg7 7 Ng5 (Diagram 3) 7...e6

The older 7...d5 8 f4 0-0 9 0-0 f6 is under a cloud. White is always going to be a little better if he maintains the pawn wedge on d4 and e5 against the g7-bishop, and Black has no way to challenge it effectively. The game Karpov-K.Grigrorian, Leningrad 1971 was a particularly impressive demonstration of White's play in this line. White can instead play 8 0-0 0-0 9 Re1, intending to meet ...f7-f6 by exchanging and playing Ne6, which also secures him an edge.

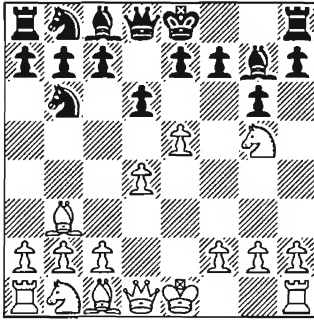


Diagram 3
Here we go...

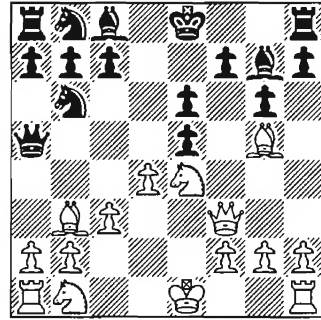


Diagram 4
How would you exploit f6?

8 Qf3

This sharp move more often than not leads to a tedious ending, but Black has to know his onions against more violent tries. 8 f4 leads to positions very similar to those discussed in the next game.

8...Qe7

Neither 8...0-0 9 Qh3 h6 10 Ne4 (see the classic positional crush Dzindzihashvili-Alburt, New York 1984) nor 8...Qd7 9 Ne4 dxe5 10 dxe5 Bxe5 11 Nf6+ is palatable for Black.

9 Ne4

White has other moves, of course, but if he doesn't go in for the text then 8 Qf3 was just a stupid move, obstructing the f-pawn.

9...dxe5 10 Bg5 Qb4+

Exiling the queen like this looks rash, but experience has shown that Black must keep her in touch with e5.

11 c3 Qa5 (Diagram 4) 12 Nf6+

The tedious ending I mentioned arises after 12 Bf6 Bxf6 13 Qxf6 (13 Nxf6+ Ke7 achieves nothing and loses a pawn) 13...0-0 14 Qxe5 Qxe5 15 dxe5 Bd7. Alburt claims this is equal, but in practice White has often ground Black down from here with his space advantage (Khalifman-Fedorowicz, Wijk aan Zee 1991 and Timman-Alburt, Taxco 1985 being two examples). Instead Black might try 14...Nc6. The subsequent ending after 15 Qxa5 is distinctly preferable to that after 14...Qxe5. 15 Nf6+ Kh8 16 Qf4 Kg7 gives an interesting position which is okay for Black. The problem is supposed to be 15 Qxc7 Nxd4 16 0-0 Nxb3 17 axb3 Qxa1 18 Nf6+ as in a 1985 Ljubojevic-Alburt game. This is meant to give White a winning attack after 18...Kh8 19 Qe5 Qxb2 20 g4 Qc2 21 c4 (threatening c4-c5) 21...Qxb3 22 Nd2 Qa2 23 Nde4, but presumably doesn't since a good many grandmasters who were certainly not ignorant of this piece of theory have elected to

play 14...Nc6 in the last twenty years, some of them no doubt after good chats with their computers. Unfortunately they haven't been kind enough to publish their idea, so we'll have to guess, and I'm afraid after a bit of trying I don't have a guess. (Black can decline the rook with 17...Qf5, of course, but he must be a bit worse then.)

12...Kf8

Evidently the only move. The position now is viciously tactical.

13 d5

The only sensible way to meet Black's threat of ...exd4, for example 13 0-0? exd4 14 Qf4 N8d7 15 cxd4 Qf5. The text sidelines Black's queen.

13...e4! (Diagram 5)

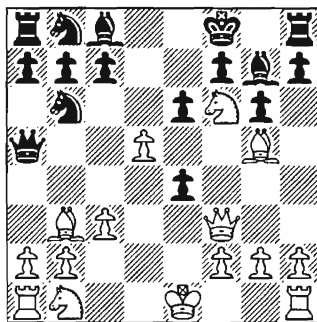


Diagram 5
Black stays alert

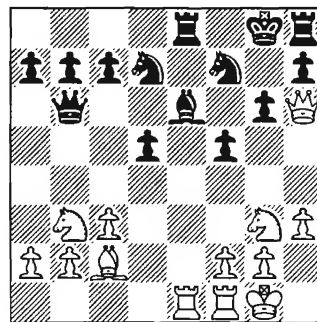


Diagram 6
The smoke has cleared

Again this is pretty much forced as 13...exd5 14 Nxd5 Nxd5 15 Bxd5, for example, is crushing. The point of the text is that 14 Qxe4? drops a piece after 14...h6 15 dxe6 Bxe6, as Joe Gallagher found out the hard way in Gallagher-Blees 1988, although with typical resilience he didn't let that stop him drawing the game.

14 Nxe4

Understandably avoiding the complications which arise after either 14 Qg3 or 14 Qf4, but the text enables Black to consolidate. After 14 Qf4 Black can obtain good play with 14...Nxd5! 15 Bxd5 h6! (15...exd5? 16 b4 is dire) 16 Qxe4 (the point of Black's clever intermezzo was that 16 Bh4 exd5 17 b4 g5 is now possible; 16 Bxe4 hxg5 17 Qf3 Qe5 18 Ng4 Qf4 is also good for Black) 16...hxg5! 17 Bxb7 Rh4, when either 18 Qd3 Bxf6 19 Bxa8 Ba6 20 Qe3 Nd7 or 18 g4 Bxb7 19 Qxb7 Bxf6 20 Qxa8 Qe5+ and 21...c6 gives Black interesting play for his exchange.

Nigel Short's 14 Qg3 is critical, when 14...Na6 is the best move, and after 15 dxe6 either 15...h6! 16 e7+ Kxe7 17 Nd5++ Ke8 18 Nxc7+ Nxc7 19 Qxc7 Qxg5 20 Qxf7+ Kd8 21 Qxg7 Re8, when Black has sur-

prisingly good compensation, or 15...Qf5 16 e7+ Kxe7 17 Ng8++ Ke8 18 Nh6 Bxb6 19 Bxb6 Be6 20 0-0 Bxb3 21 axb3 f6, when White has unsurprisingly good compensation, are unresolved.

14...exd5 15 0-0

In a later game another opponent of Marinkovic tried 15 Be3 N8d7 16 Bxb6? axb6 17 Ng5 Ne5 18 Qg3 h6 and lost considerably more quickly.

15...Be6

And not, of course, 15...dxe4?? 16 Qxf7 mate.

16 Ng3

An admission of defeat. Black now has an extra pawn and merely needs to develop and consolidate, but 16 Nf6 N8d7 just promotes exchanges.

16...N8d7 17 Nd2 Re8 18 Bc2 Ne5 19 Qf4 Nbd7 20 Bh6 Qb6 21 Rae1 Bxb6+ 22 Qxb6+ Kg8 23 h3 f5 24 Nb3 Nf7 (Diagram 6)

Expelling the queen. Black has consolidated and is now winning, although the process takes a long time.

25 Qd2 Nf6 26 Nd4 Bd7 27 Rxe8+ Bxe8 28 Re1 Bd7 29 h4 Kg7 30 h5 Re8

White always seems to be a move behind – he got Nd4 in just when Black had arranged to retreat the e6-bishop, and now he is one move too late to confine the black king and rook in the corner with h6+.

31 Rxe8+ Nxe8 32 h6+

This merely creates a weakness. I suspect White would have done better to try 32 hxg6, although he must be lost.

32...Kf8 33 Bb3 Qd6 34 Nf3 Nf6 35 Ne2 c6 36 g3 Ng4 37 Kg2 Qc5 38 Nf4 b5 39 Qe2 Qe7 40 Qd2 Nfxh6

I don't see why 40...Ngxh6 41 Qd4 Bc8, preserving the a-pawn, wasn't possible, but maybe Black was in time trouble.

41 Qd4 Nf7 42 Qxa7 Be8 43 Qd4 Qe4 44 a4 Qxd4 45 Nxd4 bxa4 46 Bxa4 Nd8 47 Nd3 Ke7

Black has made things difficult for himself, but he knuckles down and grinds it out.

48 f3 Nf6 49 Kf2 Kd6 50 b4 Bd7 51 Nc5 Bc8 52 Bc2 Ne6 53 Ncxe6 Bxe6 54 Bb1 Bc8 55 Bd3 Bd7 56 Bc2 Nh5 57 f4 Nf6 58 Nb3 Bc8 59 Bd3 Ne4+ 60 Bxe4 dxe4 61 c4 Be6 62 Nd2 c5 63 b5 Kc7

Black is winning now. There is no defence to the plan of ...h7-h6, ...g6-g5xf4 and then using the h-pawn to divert White's king.

64 Ke3 Kb6 65 Ke2 h6 66 Ke3 Ka5 67 Kf2 Kb4 68 Ke3 Bc8 69 Kf2 Bb7 70 Ke3 Kc3 71 g4 h5 72 gxh5 gxh5

White has done Black's work of creating a passed pawn for him, but it made no difference.

73 Ke2 h4 74 b6 h3 75 Nf1 Kxc4 76 Ne3+ Kb5 77 Nxf5 h2 78 Ng3

Kxb6 79 f5 Kc7 80 Kf2 e3+ 0-1

Statistics

White has scored 60% after 7 Ng5 but only 54% after the subsequent 7...e6.

Theoretical?

Brutally so, I fear. The position at move 12 involves virtually nothing but tactics, and if you don't know them you'll have to work them out – good luck!

Theoretical Status

Not clear. There hasn't been a lot of practice in this line in the last ten years, and what there has been has mainly been in the ending. If Black's happy to grind that out then theoretically he is fine. If he wants to sharpen the play then everything turns on 14...Nc6 – if Black can avoid getting mated in the style of Ljubojevic-Alburt then he can look forward to reasonable play there, and the sharp variations in the notes to the game give Black full-blooded chances.

Game 18

□ **Grischuk** ■ **Ponomariov**

Torshavn 2000

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 g6 5 Bc4 Nb6 6 Bb3 Bg7 7 a4

White aims to provoke ...a7-a5. This has various benefits for him – if he intends to play the line in the game then Black's knight on b6 is unprotected, which makes life that little bit harder for Black in the sharp positions which arise, while some other points are explained in the next game.

7...a5

A very critical moment. What if Black doesn't cooperate? The obvious non-cooperative move is 7...dxe5, and now 8 Nxe5 Bxe5! 9 dxe5 Qxd1+ 10 Kxd1 Nc6 11 a5 Nd7 12 e6 fxe6 13 Bxe6 Nde5 is comfortable for Black. White, however, has a cunning plan, which is 8 a5 N6d7 9 Bxf7+ (already there is no way back: 9 Qe2 0-0 10 dxe5 Nc5 and 9 dxe5 Nxe5 10 Qxd8+ Kxd8 11 Ng5 Ke8 are both fine for Black) 9...Kxf7 10 Ng5+ Kg8 11 Ne6 Qe8 12 Nxc7 Qd8 (this is the best square, preventing the knight getting out from a8, although 12...Qf7!? has also been played) 13 Nxa8 (13 Nc7 draws by repetition, which was good enough for Peter Svidler in Svidler-Khalifman 1995, unless Black fancies ...Qf7!? next time around) 13...exd4 (**Diagram 7**)

This position is critical for 4...g6 and is very complicated and interesting to analyse. White's first try was 14 c3 Nc5 (14...Nf6 15 cxd4/0-0 Na6 is another notion, just allowing White to recapture on d4, but using the extra time to develop and win the a8-knight) 15 cxd4 (15 b4

Ne4) 15...Bxd4 16 0-0, but after 16...e5 17 Be3 Nba6 (further corraling the knight) 18 Nc3 Bf5 19 Rc1 Kg7 20 Bxd4 Qxd4 Alburt picked up the knight and won in Christiansen-Alburt, USA 1990. In this line 16 Be3 has also been tried and got nowhere: 16...e5 17 Bxd4 exd4 enables White to force the e-pawn to d4, where he can at least win that in return for his a8-knight, but no more, for example 18 0-0 Nba6 19 Nd2 Be6 20 Re1 Bf7 21 Ne4 d3 22 b4 Nxe4 23 Rxe4 Kg7 24 Ra3 d2 25 Re2 Re8 26 Rxe8 Bxe8 27 Ra2 Qxa8 28 Rxd2 (Oral-de Firmian Reykjavik 2000).

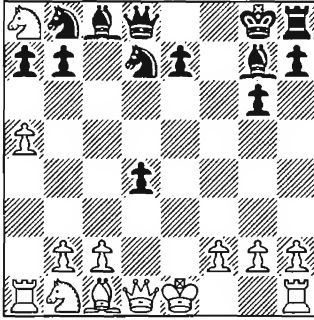


Diagram 7
A key position

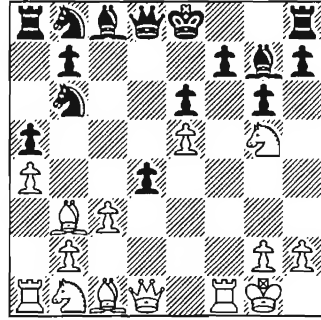


Diagram 8
Tricky

Recently, therefore, returning to diagram 7, White has tried 14 0-0 Nc6 (14...Nf6 15 c3 Na6 is the same as after 14 c3 Nf6) 15 c3 Nc5 16 b4 dxc3 17 Qxd8+ Nxd8 18 bxc5 (18 Ra3 has been suggested, when I think Black ought to play 18...c2) 18...c2 19 Nc3 (the only move to prevent greater material losses) 19...Bxc3 20 Ra3 (or 20 Ra2 Bf5 21 Nc7 when I suggest 21...Nc6 in place of 21...Kf7, Blehm-Navarro, Aviles 2000) 20...Bf6 21 Nc7 Kf7 22 Nd5 Nc6 23 Nxf6 exf6 24 f3 h5, when Black had reasonable compensation in Almasi-de la Villa Garcia, Pamplona 1999.

At the moment these games, which have been annotated in various places, represent the last word in theory, but clearly there are many other moves both sides could try. If Black can't make this work then his whole opening scheme is in trouble, since the present game is discouraging indeed.

8 Ng5

Apart from this 8 exd6 is also quite annoying. Black might be reduced to 8...Qxd6, since 8...exd6 does not go with ...g7-g6 and 9 0-0 0-0 10 Bg5 is good for White, while 8...cxd6 9 0-0 0-0 10 h3 is also nice for White, whose bishop is safe from ...Na5 and who has the splendid b5-outpost.

8...e6 9 f4

9 Qf3 is not so popular with 7 a4 a5 in, since now 9...Qe7 10 Ne4 dxe5 11 Bg5 Qb4+ 12 c3? drops the bishop on b3. Instead White has to try 12 Nbd2 when Black should not play 12...Qxd4? 13 0-0-0 with a strong initiative, but 12...f5 13 Nf6+ Kf7 with entertaining and virtually untried complications.

9...dxe5 10 fxe5 c5 11 c3

Less good is 11 0-0 Qxd4+ 12 Qxd4 cxd4 13 Nxf7 0-0.

11...cxd4

Black needs to make this exchange since after 11...0-0 12 0-0 Nc6 White can ignore the threat to the d-pawn with 13 Ne4! and slaughter Black as in the famous game Kasparov-Palatnik, Daugavpils 1978 – one of the games whose exuberant tactical genius first announced to the chess world that 15-year-old Garry Kasparov was a champion in waiting.

12 0-0 (Diagram 8)

White uses the tactic 12...dxc3?? 13 Qxd8+ and Nxf7+ to force 12...0-0, although I don't see that 12 cxd4 Nc6 13 Nf3 f6 14 Nc3 would actually have any concrete drawback.

12...0-0 13 cxd4 Nc6 14 Nf3 f6 15 Nc3!

A very strong pawn sacrifice. 15 exf6 Qxf6 16 Be3 Nd5 17 Bf2 Nf4 18 Nc3 Nh3+ is the old line. If White wanted to play this he shouldn't have included 7 a4, since now after 19 gxh3 Qxf3 20 Qxf3 Rxf3 he has to spend time defending the bishop on b3, but in either event Black does a lot better there than he does after the text.

15...fxe5

Black could play 15...Nd5 but if he does he is just conceding that he's going to be worse at no material cost.

16 Bg5 (Diagram 9)

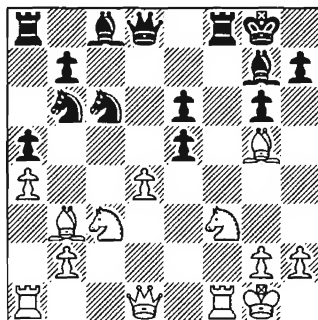


Diagram 9
The point

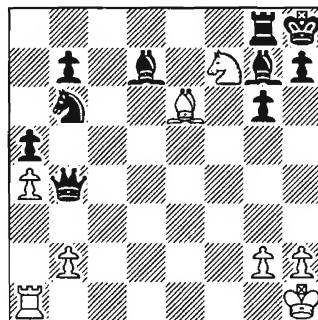


Diagram 10
A fitting finish

16...Qd7

16...Qe8 17 dxe5 Nxe5 18 Nxe5 Rxf1+ 19 Qxf1 Bxe5 20 Re1 is pretty much the same, when White has tremendous compensation with the threat of Ne4-f6.

17 dxe5 Nxe5 18 Nxe5 Rxf1+

After 18...Qxd1 19 Raxd1 Bxe5 White still has an extremely strong initiative for the pawn and Black is struggling to develop his queen-side pieces, for example 20 Rfe1 Bg7 21 Be7 Rf5 22 g4 Rf4 23 Bc5 was already winning in one game.

19 Qxf1 Qd4+

19...Bxe5 20 Rd1, with the idea of Rd8+, wins at once for White.

20 Kh1 Qxe5 21 Bd8!

Drawing Black's attention to the merits of interpolating 7 a4 a5 in the most brutal way. Without these moves the position would be no better than unclear for White.

21...Qc5

This had all happened before in a couple of games, and Black was supposed to be okay after 21...Ra6. In fact he is anything but okay as Volzhin demonstrated that 22 Rd1 is winning for White. He is threatening 23 Bxb6 Rxb6 24 Rd8+ and nothing much helps Black, for example 22...Na8 23 Nd5!, 22...Qf5 23 Qxf5 gxf5 24 Bxb6 Rxb6 25 Rd8+ and Nb5 winning a piece, or 22...h6 23 Bc2. Volzhin suggests that if Black wants to keep playing 21...Qd6 22 Rd1 Nd5 is the only way, but his 23 Bh4! is still very strong. Fritz's 23...Bxc3 24 bxc3 Bd7 is not as simple to refute as it looks – Black can at least develop all his pieces – but I am sure White is much better, while 23...Qf8 24 Nxd5 Qxf1+ 25 Rxf1 exd5 26 Bxd5+ Kh8 27 b3 is also horrid.

22 Ne4 Qb4 23 Ng5 Kh8 24 Qf7 Bd7 25 Bxe6 Rxd8

25...Bxe6 26 Nxe6 also mates.

26 Qg8+ Rxc8 27 Nf7 mate (Diagram 10)

Black didn't look like someone who would be world champion two years later in this game, but presumably he relied upon theory until it came time to play 21...Ra6, noticed 22 Rd1, and after that things are grim.

Statistics

Black has managed 20% after 15 Nc3, though he does okay if White refrains from this critical line.

Theoretical?

Fairly – one *could* punt 7...dxe5 and the exchange sacrifice and hope to work it out, but the main thing to remember is to avoid the position after 8 Ng5.

Theoretical Status

The last word has yet to be said on the exchange sacrifice. If that doesn't work Black needs a fundamental new idea quite early in this line to keep 4...g6 alive as an independent system.

Game 19

□ V.Dimitrov ■ Marinkovic

Tivat 1995

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 g6 5 Bc4 Nb6 6 Bb3 Bg7 7 Qe2

White's other moves are not particularly effective. 7 Nbd2 was Spassky's choice, but Fischer's 7...0-0 8 h3 a5 9 a4 dxe5 10 dxe5 Na6 (remember this manoeuvre) is already nice for Black. 7 e6 Bxe6 8 Bxe6 fxe6 9 Ng5 Qd7 10 Qf3 Bf6 is poor. 7 0-0 Nc6 8 Qe2 is the note to White's 8th.

7...Nc6

This is not Black's only idea. He can also play 7...0-0 8 h3 (again White should prevent 8...Bg4) 8...a5 9 a4 dxe5 10 dxe5 Na6 11 0-0 (11 Be3 Nd5 12 0-0 Nxe3 13 Qxe3 gives White nothing much) 11...Nc5 12 Rd1 Qe8 13 Nc3 Nxb3 14 cxb3. It looks as though this position ought to be quite nice for Black, but in fact it is very difficult to find much to do. 14...Be6 15 Nd4 Bd5 16 Nxd5 Nxd5 17 Nf5 (Nunn-Howell, Port Erin 1994) doesn't necessarily have to be bad for Black, but neither 17...c6 18 Nxg7 Kxg7 nor 17...gxf5 18 Rxd5 is exactly comfortable for him.

8 h3!

White avoids the line 8 0-0 dxe5 9 dxe5 Nd4 10 Nxd4 Qxd4, which is fine for Black since 11 Re1 Bg4 is disruptive, and 11 e6 Bxe6 12 Bxe6 fxe6 misses the mark after either 13 Qxe6 Qc4 or 13 Nd2 (to control c4) 13...e5. If Black now tries 8...dxe5 9 dxe5 Nd4 10 Nxd4 Qxd4 then the point is that 11 f4 is legal, followed by Nc3, Be3 and so on.

8...a5

Black can also try 8...0-0 9 0-0 Na5 when he obtains the two bishops, although White has decidedly more space in a messy position and has usually managed to retain an edge. After 10 Nc3 Nxb3 11 axb3 Speelman's 11...h6, preventing Bg5 and preparing ...f7-f6 and ...fxe5, may be best. If White is worried about this line then he can try to prevent it by 7 a4 a5, since ...Na5 is now impossible.

9 a4 0-0 10 0-0 dxe5

Of course this simplifying idea is not forced, but 10...Bf5 and especially 10...d5 have never done very well.

11 dxe5 Nd4 12 Nxd4 Qxd4 13 Re1 e6

Black can also try 13...Bd7 when 14 Nd2 e6 is the game and 14 Nc3 e6 15 Bg5 h6 equalises since 16 Be7? Rfe8 17 Rad1 Qxe5 wins Black a pawn. 14 c3 Qh4 is also reckoned to equalise, but I would have

thought that 15 e6 Bxe6 16 Bxe6+ fxe6 17 Qxe6 will always leave White with a nagging edge. 13...Be6, braving the doubled pawns, or 13...Bf5 followed by ...Qd7 and ...Be6, are also possible.

14 Nd2 (Diagram 11)

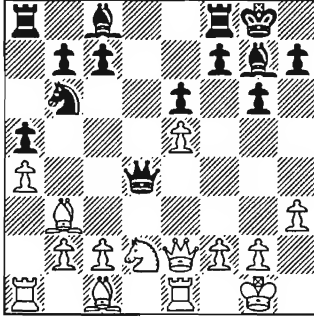


Diagram 11
The second knight heads for f3

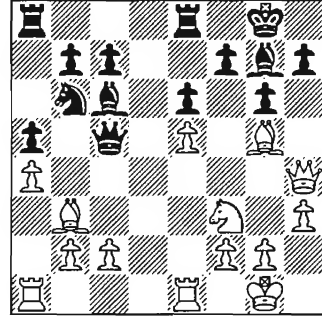


Diagram 12
Black holds firm

14...Bd7

In the earlier game Short-Timman, Tilburg 1991, Black had played 14...Nd5 at this point, which White had met with 15 Nf3 Qc5 16 Qe4 Qb4 17 Bc4! (a brilliant idea, mutilating his queenside pawns and giving up the bishop just to get the queen to h4; meanwhile accepting Black's pawn sacrifice with 17 Bxd5 exd5 18 Qxd5 is beneath the contempt of any commentator I've seen – Black's bishops and light-square control evidently give him compensation, but whether they give him full equality is perhaps another matter) 17...Nb6 18 b3 Nxc4 19 bxc4. Stop me if you've seen it before, but I can't resist showing the rest: 19...Re8 20 Rd1 Qc5 21 Qh4 b6 22 Be3 Qc6? (22...Qf8 was essential according to Rogers; whether White is actually then much better in this much-quoted game is open to debate) 23 Bh6 Bh8 24 Rd8 Bb7 25 Rad1 Bg7 (26 Qe7 was threatened) 26 R8d7 Rf8 (the move Timman had overlooked until too late was 26...Qe4 27 Rxf7!) 27 Bxg7 Kxg7 28 R1d4 (preventing ...Qe4) 28...Rae8 29 Qf6+ Kg8 30 h4 h5, and now the entertaining 31 Kh2 Rc8 32 Kg3 Rce8 33 Kf4 Bc8 34 Kg5 1-0 in view of Kh6 and mate.

15 Nf3 Qc5 16 Be3 Qe7 17 Bg5 Qc5 18 Qe4

White could draw, of course, but how he is to make progress is not clear. The text tries to get to h4 as in Short-Timman, but doesn't really work. Meanwhile Black was ready to start uncurling with moves like ...h7-h6, ...Bc6 and ...Rad8.

18...Bc6 19 Qh4 Rfe8 (Diagram 12)

White was threatening 20 Be7.

20 Nh2

Nothing was much better than this. My computer loves 20 Be3 Qe7 21 Qxe7 Rxe7 22 Bxb6 both in this position and in many in this variation, but this leads nowhere as Black can regroup by doubling rooks on the d-file, taking his bishop to c5 to remove the knight on d4 and playing his king to the centre. He should be careful about ...Bd5; exchanging these bishops may just give White's knight the eternal b5-outpost, and White's king is already eyeing the c4-b5 pathway longingly.

20...Qb4 21 Qxb4

21 Ng4 h5 22 Nf6+ Bxf6 23 Bxf6 Qxh4 24 Bxh4 Bd5 25 Bxd5 exd5 (and not 25...Nxd5 when White's domination of the d-file will give him the advantage) is also about equal – Black can continue with ...c7-c5, ...d5-d4 and ...Nd5 when his play on the queenside is just as good as anything White can generate on the kingside.

21...axb4 22 a5 Nd7 23 Ng4 h5 24 Nf6+ Nxf6 25 exf6 Bf8 26 Bf4 Bd6 27 Bxd6 cxd6 28 Red1 d5 29 Rd4 Ra7 30 Rxb4 ½-½

After Black regains his pawn with 30...Rea8, there is little left to play for.

Statistics

White has scored 66% after 7 Qe2.

Theoretical?

Not desperately so. White plays for a quiet edge.

Theoretical Status

Black is a bit passive in the system in the game, although solid enough. I would be inclined to investigate the ...Na6 idea a bit more.

4...g6 in general needs a lot of work if Black is going to be able to play it with confidence. In my opinion Black simply can't allow the system in Game 17 and he has to make Albur's exchange sacrifice work. As theory stands Black also has to accept fairly dull, albeit solid, positions in Games 16 and 18.

Game 20

Zuidema Haakert

Den Haag 1985

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 c4 Nb6 6 e6 fxe6 (Diagram 13)

6...Bxe6? 7 d5 wins a piece, of course.

It's only fair to say that White has six moves in the diagram position, all of which are dangerous (7 d5, 7 Nc3, 7 Ng5, 7 Bd3, 7 h4 and 7 Be3, since you ask) and many of which can transpose, confusingly, to each

other, and that a book like this can't possibly give more than a very general view, especially since this is not a main line. Fortunately, though, Herren Fleck and Haakert were kind enough to share their secrets in an extensive theoretical article in 'Kaissiber 19' – a whole 20 pages packed with games and original analysis. (Kaissiber is a fine German fanzine specialising in chess history and rare yet playable opening variations). If anyone is seriously interested in this line, then I recommend sending 7.10 Euros to the editor Stefan Bucker without further ado. Having said that, this is a variation where experience and a general idea of Black's aims do help, so it is possible to play it at a lower level without detailed theoretical knowledge.

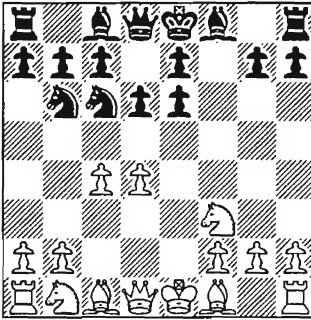


Diagram 13

Let the games commence...

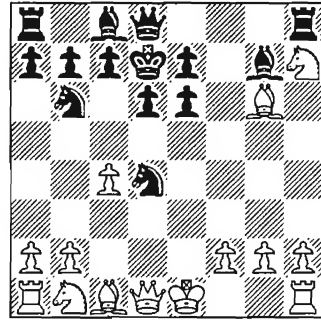


Diagram 14

Who is better?

The variation which best illustrates Black's ideas is 7 Ng5 g6 (7...e5 is also possible) 8 Bd3 (8 Qf3 Nxd4 9 Qf7+ Kd7 10 Be3 Nc2+ 11 Kd2 Nxa1 or 11...Nxe3 is fine for Black, as is ECO's 8 d5 exd5 9 cxd5 Nb4 10 Qf3 N4xd5, although in both cases great complications remain and in the latter case White can draw at once with 11 Qf7+ Kd7 12 Qe6+ Ke8) 8...Nxd4 9 Nxh7 Bg7 10 Bxg6+ Kd7 (**Diagram 14**).

This position was given as clearly better for White without analysis by Hort and Schwarz, yet practice favours Black. Black can continue with ...c7-c5, ...Kc7, ...Bd7, ...Bc6 and ...Qg8; all his pieces have prospects, and White has weak pawns to defend. In the long term White's king may be the less safe. Obviously the kingside has its dangers, and on the queenside he can never enjoy the cosy carapace of pawns that Black's monarch has. In the short term Black can meet 11 Ng5 either by giving up the exchange with 11...Nxc4 or with 11...Qf8 – after the latter move V.Gurevich-Ilczuk, Koszalin 1999 continued 12 Nc3 Nxc4 13 Qa4+ b5 14 Nxb5 Nb6 15 Qa5, when White was able to save himself only by pulling out his Grandmaster card and offering a draw.

7 Bd3 can also be met with 7...g6: 8 h4 Bg7 9 h5 Nxd4 10 Nxd4 (or 10 hxg6 Nxf3+) 10...Bxd4 11 hxg6 hxg6 12 Rxh8+ Bxh8 13 Bxg6+ Kd7 is

similar to the above and is not dangerous; 9 Be3 e5 10 d5 Nb4 11 Be4 (White must preserve this piece) 11...e6 is also fine for Black.

7 d5 exd5 8 cxd5 Nb4 9 Nc3 e6 10 dxe6 Bxe6 leaves White struggling to demonstrate compensation. 7 h4 is directed rather obviously against Black's ...g7-g6. The traditional recipe is 7...e5 8 d5 Nd4 9 Nxd4 exd4 10 Qxd4 e5 11 Qd1, when Fleck suggests 11...Bf5 12 Nc3 h5 13 Bd3 g6 with the intention of ...Bh6. This is possible, of course, but I must say White looks a little better to me. Another possibility is 7...Nd7, with the intention of taking this knight to f6 and continuing with ...e6-e5, thus hopefully making h4 look stupid. Finally, the defiant 7...g6 might be worth trying, for example 8 h5 Bg7 9 hxg6 hxg6 10 Rxh8+ Bxh8. Now White can collect the g-pawn with either 11 Qd3 or 11 Bd3, but either of those moves can be answered nonchalantly with 11...Kd7, when play is similar to variations given above, although White does retain his d-pawn.

7 Be3 can lead to the position considered in the note to White's ninth in the game. Otherwise 7...g6 8 h4 Bg7 9 h5 (9 Nc3 is the transposition I mentioned) 9...e5 10 d5 e4! 11 Ng5 Ne5 leads to splendid complications after either 12 hxg6 or 12 Nxe4 – these are analysed in detail in Kaissiber with the conclusion that Black is okay.

7 Nc3 g6 8 h4 Bg7 (Diagram 15)

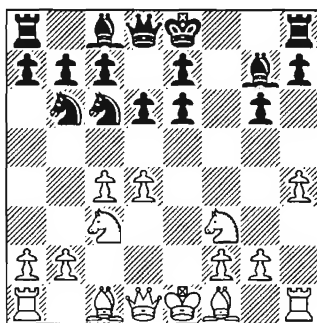


Diagram 15
Should White push the h-pawn?

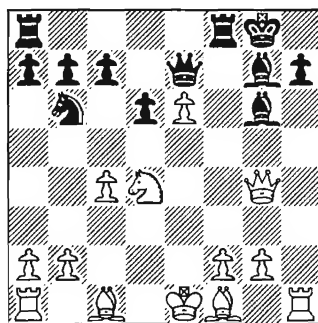


Diagram 16
Safe castling?

9 h5

After considering the above these moves should need no explanation, but this was an important moment. Black is now ready for ...e6-e5, d5 Nd4 and the best move is probably 9 Be3. Fleck says so, and the then soon-to-be FIDE World Champion Ruslan Ponomarev thought so too when Ivanchuk played this variation against him in their title match. The idea is simply to meet ...e6-e5 with d5 Nd4, Nxd4 exd4, Bxd4. Nonetheless Black should continue 9...e5 10 d5 Nd4 11 Nxd4 exd4 12 Bxd4 Bxd4 13 Qxd4 e5 14 dxe6 (or 14 Qe3 0-0 15 h5 g5 16 h6 Rf4 with

sharp play) 14...0-0 15 0-0-0 (15 h5 Qf6 has seen several draws) 15...Bxe6 16 Ne4 Qe7 17 h5. Fleck gives White the advantage here, although I'm not sure this is so significant after 17...Qg7. But there is no denying that this variation spoils Black's fun; probably White can retain at least a little edge this way. Another order is 9...0-0 10 h5 e5, but the trouble then is that White can flick in 11 hxg6, when 11...exd4 12 gxh7+ is probably just a bit too dangerous, and if 11...hxg6 12 d5 Nd4 13 Nxd4 exd4 14 Bxd4 Bxd4 15 Qxd4 e5 16 Qe3 White has succeeded in opening the h-file already and stands a little better than after 14 Qe3 above, although it's not necessarily anything fatal; Black continues ...Qf6 and ...Qf4.

9...e5 10 d5 Nd4 11 hxg6

White can also play 11 Nxd4 exd4 12 Nb5 e5 13 hxg6 Bf5! transposing to the game, save that 14 dxe6 is impossible.

11...Bf5

11...Bg4 (the most popular) and simply 11...hxg6 are also possible, with the usual complications.

12 Nxd4 exd4 13 Nb5

Both 13 gxh7 Qd7 and 13 Rxh7 Rxh7 14 gxh7 Kd7! produce perplexing complications, but Black seems to be fine.

13...e5 14 dxe6

14 Rxh7 Rxh7 15 gxh7 Kd7 is at least okay for Black.

14...Qe7 15 Nxd4 Bxg6 16 Qg4

Haakert had previously had a postal game which had gone 16 Be3 0-0-0 17 Qg4 Rhf8 with a very sharp position in which he felt Black stood well, although in that game he had outcombined himself and lost. The text prevents long castling on account of 17 Bg5.

16...0-0 (Diagram 16)

Cheeky, but White cannot get at the king now that he cannot trade bishops with Bd3, and in fact Black's rooks come to the ideal 'e' and f-files sooner this way.

17 Bg5 Bf6 18 Bxf6

Haakert had intended to meet 18 Bh6 with 18...c5!? 19 Bxf8 Rxf8 20 Nb5 Bxb2 with great complications, for example 21 Rd1 (21 Rb1? Qf6 is strong) 21...a6 22 Nxd6 Bc3+ 23 Ke2. It is understandable that his opponent was not up for this. Quite possibly the position is objectively good for Black, and certainly one slip could spell the end for White. Instead White sends his king to safety and navigates the game towards a draw.

18...Qxf6 19 0-0-0 Qxf2 20 Bd3 Qf4+ 21 Qxf4 Rxf4 22 Bxg6 hxg6 23 b3 a6 24 Rhf1 Raf8 25 Rxf4 Rxf4 26 Re1 Nc8 27 e7

If White were to allow this pawn to be blockaded he might easily stand worse.

27...Nxe7 28 Rxe7 Rxd4 29 Rxc7 b5 30 Rc6 Kf7 ½-½

Statistics

Not as bad as you would think from the press, actually. Black scores 45% after 4...Nc6, but that includes transpositions to the Exchange variation. On the other hand, when White goes in for the 'refutation' 5 c4 Nb6 6 e6 fxe6, Black's percentage rises to 48%.

Theoretical?



As theoretical as you make it, really. It's not likely White is going to know the sharp lines unless he knows you are coming, and if you know roughly what the ideas are, you'll stand a chance. On the other hand there is no doubt that preparation is going to help a lot; there are plenty of games in Kaissiber where one move turned a good position for Black into a quick defeat.

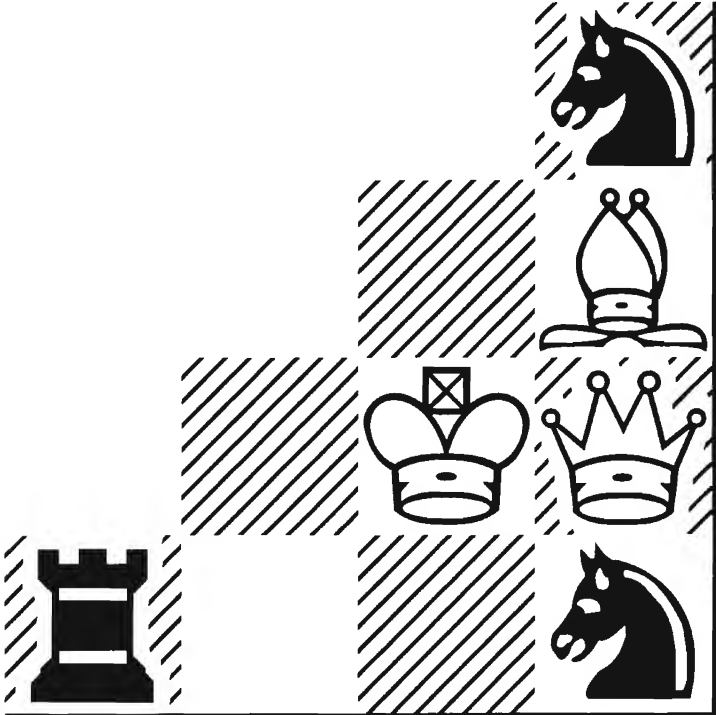
Theoretical Status

Very risky – ask anyone! On the other hand, it's hard to imagine a bigger nightmare for an unsuspecting opponent. Black is taking his life in his hands, but no-one has yet identified a line which gives White a clear advantage.

Chapter Four

Exchange Variation with 5...cxd6

-  Introduction
-  Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 cxd6

Obviously White is not trying to knock Black over with this line. He is content to aim for a small edge and keep a space advantage of four ranks to three without the onus of defending the e5-pawn. Meanwhile, Black can point at the slight weakness of the d4-pawn. This may seem more theoretical than real at this stage, but in fact Black's main plans in this line revolve around counterplay against this pawn.

Black has two popular moves. 5...cxd6 is examined here, while 5...exd6 is seen in Chapter 5. The choice between the two is entirely a matter of taste. Each has scored the average 45 or 46% over many games and many years. 5...Qxd6 does not lose at once (6 c5? Qe6+) but is just a slightly inferior move – sooner or later the queen will have to move again to prevent this problem (after 6 Be2, for example).

Before we move on to the analysis of 5...cxd6, it is worth making two points about move order. First, White should probably play 4 c4 before exd6, as 4 exd6 allows the interesting possibility of 4...Qxd6. Secondly, once White has played 4 c4 he should not continue with 5 Nf3.

This is a mix of systems. Black's best bet is to play 5...g6, 6...Bg7 7...0-0 and 8...Nc6 and/or ...Bg4, just as if exd6 cxd6 had been inserted.

White will eventually find that he has to play exd6, and meanwhile he will have deprived himself of the most dangerous options.

Illustrative Games

Game 21

□ Gomes ■ Soppe

Itau Cup 2001

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 cxd6 (Diagram 1)

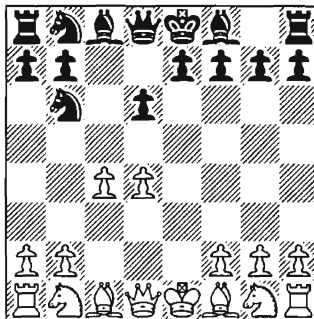


Diagram 1
5...cxd6

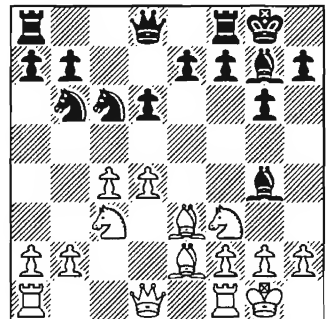


Diagram 2
All eyes on d4

5...cxd6 has always been regarded as the man's move, with 5...exd6 its tamer poor relation. Just lately, however, 5...cxd6 has come under pressure from one sophisticated move order for White, the so-called Voronezh variation. This was highly recommended by John Emms in his fine *Attacking with e4* and also by Nigel Davies in his 2001 Alekhine book ('The Voronezh is a problem, a big one in fact.'). and seems to have driven some Alekhine players away from 5...cxd6 altogether. I don't believe things are as bad as that, and I try to show why in the notes to Game 25. Before we come to the Voronezh, though, let us look at the traditional main line, which shows very clearly what Black's ideas are in this variation, and hopefully also enables us to understand the point of the trendy Voronezh.

6 Nc3 g6 7 Nf3 Bg7 8 Be2 0-0 9 0-0 Bg4 10 Be3 Nc6 (Diagram 2)

This common sequence of moves needs no explanation. Both sides develop their pieces to the most natural places. Black's put pressure on d4, while White's defend it. White has plenty of ways to deviate besides the Voronezh. I have broken these down into ideas with h2-h3 to stop ...Bg4 (Game 22), early attacking ideas (a2-a4, h2-h4, Be3/Qd2, d4-d5 and the like – Game 23) and Bd3/Nge2 systems (Game 24). Most of these are more promising than the natural development seen in this game, but this sequence is still very popular in club chess. The only real point to mention, perhaps, is that if White holds back his queen's knight – say 6 Nf3 g6 7 Be2 Bg7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Be3 – Black should start with 9...Nc6 rather than 9...Bg4, which is well met by 10 Nbd2, defending the c-pawn and nullifying Black's threat of ...Bxf3 and with it much of his counterplay.

Right now there are some tactics to notice – Black is threatening 11...Bxf3 12 Bxf3 (obviously 12 gxf3 is undesirable) 12...Nxc4. Before this could work Black needed both to castle (so that he didn't drop the knight on c4 to Qa4+) and to develop the knight to c6 (so that he didn't lose his queenside to Bxb7). This explains White's next move.

11 b3

11 d5 is no good as Black replies 11...Na5!, when White is really struggling to defend c4 since 12 b3 loses the knight on c3.

11...d5

This is the key move for Black in this line. 11...e5 is common in amateur chess and is also possible, but White replies either 12 d5 or 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 c5 and stands rather better. Nor should Black delay ...d6-d5. If he plays, for example, 11...e6, White can take the bishop pair with 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Bxf3, and then meet 13...d5 with 14 cxd5 and if necessary capturing again on d5 to produce a situation with mutual isolated queen's pawns. In this type of position development is everything, and White is slightly ahead in that sphere and also has the two bishops; Black is uncomfortably placed. With the text Black wants to fix the d4-pawn once and for all.

12 c5

12 cxd5 now would be pointless as Black can recapture on d5 with pieces and pressure the isolated d-pawn.

12...Nc8 (Diagram 3)

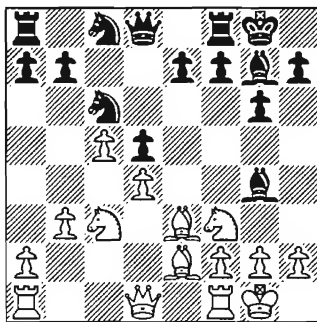


Diagram 3
Heading for f5...

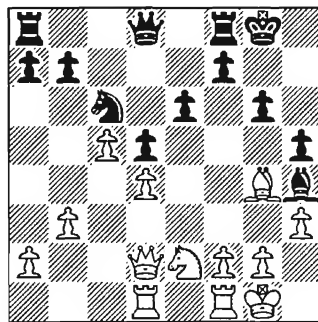


Diagram 4
A key defender falls

Notice how all Black's moves – yes, even this one – are aimed at the d4-pawn. Black's plan is to play ...e7-e6, ...Bxf3, ...Nc8-e7-f5. Once that is done his pressure on the d-pawn is going to tie White down considerably. Black may or may not play ...b7-b6 or ...a7-a6 as appropriate. Eventually he will often break with ...e5, although this needs to be carefully timed, since it weakens the d-pawn.

13 h3

To me this doesn't seem very good, although it is common and has been played by strong grandmasters. The capture ...Bxf3 is part of Black's plan and I don't see any need to encourage it. White could also play 13 Ne1 (which should be met with 13...Bxe2 14 Nxe2 b6 while White is not in a position to meet that with b3-b4) or various developing half-moves such as 13 Rc1 or Qd2, which should be met with the usual ...e7-e6, ...N8e7, ...Bxf3, ...Nf5 plan indicated above. (If White seeks to prevent ...Nf5 with g2-g4, incidentally, one counter-measure is ...f7-f5, meeting gxf5 with ...gxf5 and play down the g-file.)

White's main alternative, however is 13 b4. The rash 13...Nxb4? is now met by 14 Rb1 Na6 and then not 15 Rxb7? Nxc5!, but 15 Bxa6 and 16 Qa4, when White is much better. Instead Black usually plays 13...a6. The idea of this is that 14 a4? now simply loses the b-pawn (14...Nxb4 15 Rb1 a5) so in order to go on with his queenside advance White needs to play 14 Rb1, when Black hopes to use the soon-to-be-opened a-file for himself.



TIP: When White pushes to b4 in such a position, the reply ...a7-a6 very often holds him up for much more than a single move.

Black can also play 13...Bxf3 14 Bxf3 e6 (when his idea is to find a more suitable moment for ...a7-a6, perhaps when a2-a4 in reply is impossible for some reason), but not 13...e6, when 14 b5 Na5 15 Nd2 is rather annoying for the a5-knight. In any of these cases White will advance his pawn to b5, which Black meets with ...Na5. White's strong-looking queenside pawns are then surprisingly impotent, and Black can aim for piece play on the kingside or consider breaking with ...e5. He can also contemplate a well-timed ...b7-b6. Often c5-c6 in reply to this is not to be feared as a knight can come to d6, where it has superb prospects, while the c-pawn is reasonably easily blockaded.

13...Bxf3 14 Bxf3 e6 15 Qd2 N8e7 16 Ne2

White is already struggling a little, with d4 requiring attention. 16 Nb5 Nf5 17 Bg4 a6 18 Bxf5 axb5 19 Bc2 occurred in a Fischer game, and now 19...b4 is excellent for Black because White has weaknesses on a2 and d4 which he cannot hope to defend forever.

16...Nf5 17 Rad1 Nh4 18 Bg4 h5 19 Bg5

Of course White cannot contemplate 19 Bf3 Nxf3+.

19...Bf6 20 Bxh4 Bxh4 (Diagram 4)

This exchange is positionally very useful for Black, especially if, as here, he can manage it without changing the pawn structure by capturing on e3. White's dark-squared bishop was a fine example of Suba's quip that bad bishops defend good pawns. For example, if the major pieces were now removed from the board White would be helpless in the ending as his d4-pawn simply cannot be defended.

21 Bf3 Bf6 22 b4 a6 23 a4 b5

A strong move, illustrating a point I made above: White's passed c-pawn is not to be feared too much.

24 axb5

Black was better anyway, but I feel White should have tried to avoid this. Once the a-file is opened the battle for the file is only going to see one winner, hampered as White is by the backward queenside pawns being fixed on dark squares.

24...axb5 25 Ra1 Qc7 26 g4 hxg4 27 hxg4 Ra7 28 Kg2 Rfa8 29 Rxa7 Rxa7 30 Rb1 Ra3 31 Rb2 Bg7 32 Rb1 Qd8

Threatening ...Qf6, forking bishop and d-pawn.

33 Qc1 Qa8 34 Qd2 Qb8! (Diagram 5)

With a threat White cannot prevent.

35 Qc1 Rd3 36 Qc2 Rxf3 37 Kxf3 Qh2 38 Rd1 e5 (Diagram 6) 39 Ng3

Or 39 dxe5+ Nxe5 40 Ke3 Qg2 41 Kd2 Nc4+ 42 Kc1 Bb2+ 43 Kb1 Na3+ etc.

39...e4+ 40 Ke3 Qg2 41 Nxe4

Otherwise 41...Qf3+ wins (41 Qe2? Bh6+).

41...Qxg4

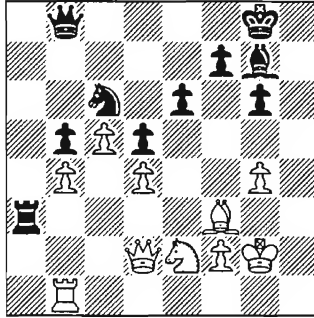


Diagram 5
A key switch

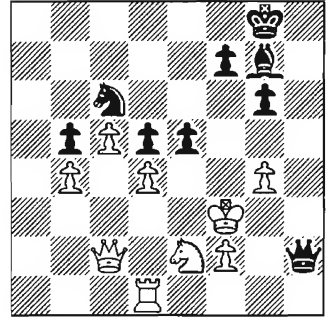


Diagram 6
A timely thematic break

41...dxe4? 42 Qxe4 puts White right back in the game, but now Black wins the knight in more favourable circumstances, since if it moves away d4 falls.

42 f3 Qh4 43 Qg2 dxe4 44 fxe4 Bxd4+ 45 Rxd4 Qe1+ 46 Kf4 Nxd4 47 Qg4 Qd2+ 48 Ke5 Nc6+ 0-1

49 Kf6 Qd8 is mate. A one-sided game – Black was much the stronger player – but thematic and instructive nonetheless.

Statistics

Black has scored 60% from the position after move 10. White should definitely seek to deviate from this 'natural' method against 5...cxd6.

Theoretical?

Not really. All Black's moves are aimed at the d4-pawn; as long as Black remembers to gang up on that, he'll be fine.

Theoretical Status

Excellent: White has virtually stopped playing like this at high levels.

Game 22

□ Khmelnitsky ■ Palatnik

Kherson 1989

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 cxd6 6 Nc3 g6 7 h3

In the last game White's main enemy was the bishop on g4. This attacked both d4 (by threatening to remove the f3 knight and leave d4 undefended) and c4 (by threatening to decoy the e2-bishop and thus leave c4 undefended). With 7 h3 White resolves to prevent the arrival

of this turbulent priest.

7...Bg7 8 Nf3 0-0 9 Be2

This is something of a key moment. To understand White's various ways of arranging his pieces at this point, we need to think about what Black is trying to do. Since his bishop cannot now develop to g4, it will have to go somewhere else, presumably f5. This rules out the convenient arrangement of Black's pieces we saw in the last game, since his knight will not be able to come from c8 to e7 and f5. Instead of this Black normally develops his bishop to f5 and his knight to c6, and then arranges the sequence ...d6-d5, c4-c5 Nc4. For this to be effective Black needs White to have a bishop on e3 for his knight to hit. So, while White's most natural way to develop is 9 Be2 Nc6 10 0-0 Bf5 11 Be3, this is playing into Black's hands a little, as we see in the note to White's 11th move. White's most cunning sequence is the one in the main line of this game, but he does have another idea at this point, which is 9 Be3 Nc6 10 Rc1 (**Diagram 7**)

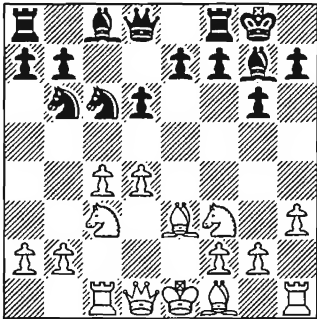


Diagram 7

White keeps the bishop on f1

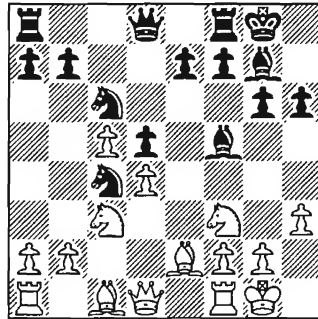


Diagram 8

The bishop returns to base

Now White is ready to meet 10...d5 11 c5 Nc4 by taking on c4 in one go, having saved the tempo spent on Be2, while he can meet 10...Bf5? with 11 d5, since 11...Na5 12 b3 is fine with the knight on c3 already defended.

TIP: Once White defends his c3-knight he is threatening d4-d5

So long as Black remembers that, however, he has two reasonable possibilities. The first is 10...d5 11 c5 Nc4 12 Bxc4 dxc4 anyway. White scarcely has better than 13 0-0 Bf5, and now White has a choice of two fairly forcing lines. This position is analysed in Nigel Davies' book – the two critical lines are 14 b3 Bd3 15 Re1 Nxd4 16 Nxd4 Bxd4 17 bxc4 Bxe3 18 Rxe3 Bxc4 19 Qxd8 Rfxd8 20 Rxe7 b5!, or 14 Qa4 e5! (and not 14...Bd3 as White's last introduced the sneaky motif of 15 Rfd1 Nxd4?? 16 Nxd4 Bxd4 17 Rxd3!) 15 Rfd1 exd4 16



Nxd4 Nxd4 17 Bxd4 Bxd4 18 Qxc4 Bxf2+ 19 Kxf2 Qg5, both of which are equal according to Davies.

Alternatively, Black can change course and, returning to the diagram position, go for 10...e5. This is based upon the point that 11 d5?! is not so good with White's kingside sleeping – Black can reply 11...Nd4 12 Nxd4 exd4 13 Bxd4 Bh6 14 Ra1 Re8+ 15 Be2 Nxc4. So White is reduced to 11 dxe5, and now Black can play either 11...Nxe5 12 Nxe5 Bxe5 with the idea of ...Be6 and ...d6-d5, equalising, or 11...dxe5 12 c5 Nd7 13 Bc4 Nd4 with complications which have been doing quite well for Black.

9...Nc6

Black continues on his course, but it has to be said that right now Black hasn't demonstrated a good answer to White's main try in this variation. For that reason Davies suggests – and I agree with him – that Black may in the future want to investigate a different approach with Movsessian's 9...e5 10 Bg5 (this is usually the answer to ...e7-e5 in this line, but may not be the best idea here) 10...f6 11 Be3 Be6! 12 d5 Bf7 13 0-0 Na6. The bishop is quite good on f7, where it helps prevent a c4-c5 break by attacking the d-pawn, and may one day come to h5 after ...f6-f5 and ...g6-g5, and by playing ...e7-e5 early Black has been able to develop his queen's knight to the useful a6-square instead of having it kicked back from c6 to e7 after d4-d5.

10 0-0 Bf5 11 Bg5

This was White's latest idea before the Voronezh was invented and, theoretically, it still stands very well. 11 Be3 is much less pointed: Black replies 11...d5 12 c5 Nc4 13 Bxc4 dxc4 and achieves the position analysed in the note to White's ninth, but without White's Rc1, which must favour Black slightly. 11 Bf4 is usually the same thing – see the next note.

11...h6

11...d5? 12 c5 Nc4 is pointless since White can just chase it away with 13 b3. Funnily enough, 11...h6 is also the main reply to 11 Bf4. Black is now threatening ...e7-e5 (an immediate 11...e5 is supposed to be strongly met by 12 Bg5, although it's not at all obvious to me that Black is badly placed after 12...Qc8). White can play various moves after 11...h6, such as 12 Rc1, which allows 12...e5 when Black is fine, or 12 Qd2, when Black plays 12...g5 (12...Kh7 is too slow; once White has protected the c3-knight he is ready for 13 d5! which gives him the advantage) and follows with ...d6-d5 or ...e7-e5 as appropriate. White can also venture 12 d5 Na5 13 Nd4, tossing a pawn to loosen Black's structure, after which 13...Naxc4 14 Nxf5 gxf5 15 b3 Ne5 16 Qd2 Kh7 17 Rac1 Ng6 18 Be3 Rc8 is a natural sequence that gives Black good chances. But the main line is the paradoxical 12 Be3, transposing to the game. The point is that ...e7-e5 is much more powerful when it attacks the bishop on f4 (or shuts it out of play after 12 Bg3 e5 13 d5?!) since White cannot meet it with an immediate d4-d5.

You would think that since Black does not really want to play ...d6-d5, c4-c5 Nc4 while White still has his bishop on c1, is supposed not to be threatening ...e7-e5 until he plays ...h7-h6 because of Bg5, and has run out of natural developing moves to play before then, that White could come up with some developing move which didn't involve this Bc1-f4-e3 pendulum. 11 Re1, for example, looks like a pretty sensible move, although as far as I know it hasn't been played. 11 b3, on the other hand, allows Black to change course effectively with 11...d5 12 c5 Nd7 when the pressure on the long diagonal is inconvenient, for example 13 Bb2 Be4 14 Na4 e5!.

12 Be3

Not 12 Bf4? e5 etc.

12...d5 13 c5

13 b3 dxc4 14 bxc4 Rc8 15 Rc1 Na5 16 c5 N6c4 is fine for Black.

13...Nc4 14 Bc1! (Diagram 8)

This is the idea. 14 Bxc4 dxc4 leads to variations similar to those analysed above in the long note to White's ninth. Black is fine there, but now he appears to be rather snookered. How is the threat of 15 b3 to be met?

14...b6 15 b3 bxc5!?

This may in the end be unsound, but White hasn't quite proved this. The alternative is to retreat meekly with 15...N4a5 16 cxb6 axb6. If Black has to exile his knight to a5 and allow an outpost on b5 it looks like his play has not worked out, and indeed practice favours White considerably from this position, although it is certainly playable for Black and he may one day be able to elaborate plans which will see him all right, although it hasn't happened yet.

16 bxc4 cxd4 17 Nxd5 e6

The other try is 17...d3 18 Bxd3 Bxd3 19 Qxd3 Bxa1 20 Bxh6 (believe it or not, this is the whole point of White's bishop shuffle at moves 11, 12 and 14) 20...Bg7 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 Qc3+. Now 22...f6? loses back the exchange to 23 Ng5 Qd6 24 Nc7, so Black continues 22...Kg8 23 Re1 and now White is supposed to be virtually winning with his active pieces and ability to create threats against the king. It seems to me that 23...Rc8 still gives Black some hope of defending, but this position is surprisingly unattractive for him.

18 Ba3 (Diagram 9)

A novelty when this game was played; earlier games had featured the limp 18 Bb2.

18...Re8

18...exd5 19 Bxf8 simply wins material.

19 Nf4 e5

A slightly fortunate tactic wins Black back his piece, but he remains under pressure.

20 Nd5 d3 21 Bxd3 Bxd3 22 Qxd3 e4 23 Qe3 exf3 24 Qxf3 Ne5
 24...Bxa1 25 Rxa1 is too dangerous.
 25 Qb3 Rb8 26 Qa4 Rbc8 27 Rac1 Qh4 28 Rfe1 Re6 29 Qxa7
 Rxc4 30 Ne7+ Kh7 31 Qb8?? (Diagram 10)

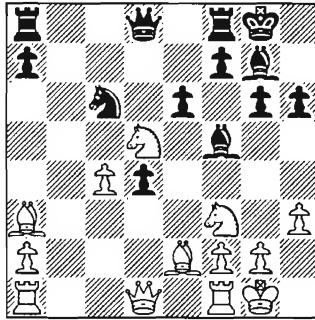


Diagram 9

The bishop comes alive again

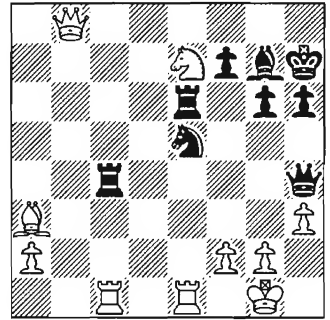


Diagram 10

Is the party over for Black?

Both sides were in time trouble. The text loses to 31...Rxe7 32 Bxe7 Rxc1 33 Bxh4? (33 Rxc1 Qxe7 is forced, but Black is better) 33...Rxe1+ 34 Kh2 Nf3+ and 35...Be5+ spearing the queen; correct was 31 Qa8.

31...h5? 32 Qg8+ Kh6 33 Re3

It seems that 33 Rxe5, with the cute twin points of 33...Bxe5 34 Nf5+ gxf5 35 Bf8+ (mating) and 33...Rxe5 34 Qxf7 (forking c4 and g6) 34...Qxe7 35 Qxe7!, would have won – aren't computers clever?

33...Rxe7 34 Rxc4 Qxc4 35 Bxe7 1-0 (time)

Black lost on time just when his courageous defence had attained a drawn position... after 35...Qc1+ 36 Kh2 Qc7 37 f4 Qxe7 38 fxe5 Bxe5+ 39 Kh1 Qc5 40 Re1 Qf2 Black can force perpetual check on the dark squares around the king.

Statistics

White has scored 53% from the position after 10...Bf5.

Theoretical?

Fairly – Black does need to be aware of the main line and the tactics in the notes to White's ninth move. On the other hand the main line is practically forced from Black's point of view, and thus quite easy to remember.

Theoretical Status

Needs work, to be frank. If I was White I'd forget the Voronezh and go back to this. Black might have to look into 15...N4a5.

Game 23

□ Salmensuu ■ Solozhenkin

Finland 2000

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 cxd6 6 Nc3

White has two alternatives at this point. The first is 6 d5, which had a brief vogue but really has no merit unless Black continues on autopilot with 6...g6? 7 Qd4!. Black's simplest reply is 6...e5. The other is something more or less insane, starting with 6 Be3 g6 and now either 7 h4!? or 7 Qd2 followed by Bh6 and h2-h4 etc. Either way Black does best not to be afraid, but to play 7...Bg7 and castle. He can strike back in the centre with ...e7-e5, and meet h5xg6 with ...fxg6 if necessary in order to defend h7 along the second rank. The positions are complicated and little explored, but this lack of exploration is because Black obviously has dangerous chances of his own.

6...g6 7 a4

White intends either to gain space on the queenside with a4-a5, Ra3 and d4-d5, or to essay the clever tactical sequence in the game. White could have pushed the a-pawn on move 6, which is still best met with 6...a5.

7...a5

Black can also play 7...Bg7 8 a5 N6d7, but this is rather harder to handle and hasn't been proven equal.

8 c5!? (Diagram 11)

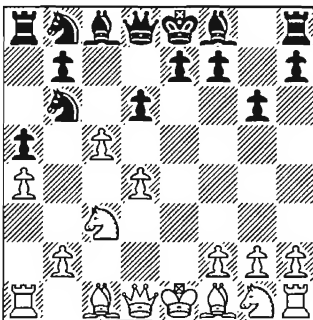


Diagram 11
White exerts pressure

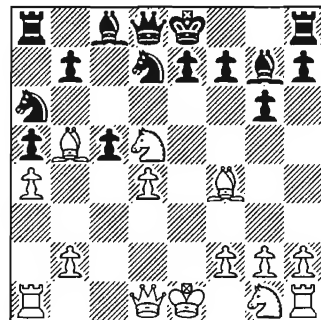


Diagram 12
A clever defence

This is White's idea. Nigel Davies had some success for a while with

the quiet 8 Nf3, but Black can deal with this by simply developing, for example 8...Bg7 9 Be3 0-0 10 Be2 Nc6 11 d5 (White has prevented 11...Na5, but alas...) 11...Ne5 12 Nxe5 Bxe5 13 0-0 Nd7. This is the problem. This knight is very well placed on c5 and can no longer be removed by b2-b4. Black has equalized.

However, 8 c5 is a challenging effort which Black needs to take seriously.

8...dxc5 9 Bb5+

Of course 9 dxc5 Qxd1+ is feeble, but now Black has to take evasive action since 9...N8d7?? 10 dxc5 and 9...Nc6?? 10 d5 lose a piece, and 9...Bd7 10 dxc5 is also ugly. Note that the reason White wanted to throw in 7 a4 a5 before 8 c5 was so that the bishop check cannot be met by ...Nc6, d4-d5 a7-a6 etc.

9...N8d7 10 Bf4

Of course White can still play 10 dxc5 but the sting has been taken out of it now that the knight has left b6; Black simply develops with ...Bg7, ...0-0, ...Nc6 and is fine. In fact ...Bg7 is also the answer to moves such as 10 Nf3 or 10 Bg5, although in this latter case Black needs to be happy about 10...Bg7 11 Nd5, which seems to force 11...f6, although this looks okay to me. Alternatively he could first play 10...h6.

10...Bg7 11 Nd5

The culmination of White's tactical sequence. He now threatens Nc7+.

11...Na6 (Diagram 12)

This was played for the one and only time in this game, but seems to present a complete answer to White's idea. The old line was 11...e5 12 dxe5 0-0 13 Nf3 Nc6 14 Bg5 (or 14 Bxc6 and 15 Bg5) 14...f6 (which is still given as the answer to 8 c5 in most books) but White has been doing rather well there. 11...0-0 loses the exchange or so after 12 Bc7 Qe8 13 Nb6 Ra6, although Black certainly obtains some compensation.

12 dxc5

At first sight 12 Bxa6 wins material, but Black has 12...e5 up his sleeve. 13 Bg5? Qxg5 14 Nc7+ Kd8 15 Nxa8 Qxg2 16 Qf3 Qxf3 17 Nxf3 bxa6 then wins for Black, who will round up the knight, while 13 Bxe5 Nxe5 14 Bb5+ Nc6 is just good for Black. After 13 dxe5 Black recaptures on a6 with the rook (and meets 14 e6?? with the unkind 14...Rxe6 *check*). The critical line may be 12 Bxa6 e5 13 Bb5 exf4 14 Qe2+ Kf8 15 Nf3, but I don't think White has much to be proud about after 15...Bxd4 16 Nxd4 cxd4 17 0-0 Qg5 18 Nc7 Ne5, as in Ansell-Cox, London League 2004, and probably still less so after 15...cxd4 16 0-0 Nf6 17 Nxf4 Qd6 followed by ...Bh6 and ...Kg7. Nonetheless this was surely better than the game, in which White quickly finds himself unable to defend the c5-pawn

12...0-0 13 Rc1 e6 14 Nc3 e5 15 Be3 Ndxc5 16 Nge2 Be6 17 0-0 Nb3 18 Qxd8 Rfxd8 19 Rcd1 Nd4 20 Bg5

White has nothing for his pawn and the Russian grandmaster cannot have been too thrilled with his technique in what follows.

20...f6 21 Be3 f5 22 Bg5 Rdc8 23 Nxd4 exd4 24 Ne2 Bc4?!

24...h6 (removing the bishop from the h4-d8 diagonal) followed by ...Rd8 was better.

25 Bxc4 Rxc4 26 b3 Rb4 27 Be7 d3

I expect you want to know why 27...Rxb3 was not played, but I'm afraid I can't help you. Black has some slightly irritating problems in coordinating his pieces, but it's hard to believe he isn't still better. Now the game peters out.

28 Nc1 Re4 29 Ba3 Nb4 30 Nxd3 Nc2 31 Bb2 Bxb2 32 Nxb2 ½-½

Statistics

White has scored tremendously after 7 a4, but not quite so well after 7...a5, and in any event there is only one game with 11...Na6! This is largely because the popularity of the line has plummeted since this reply was discovered.

Theoretical?

Not enormously, but Black can lose quickly if he doesn't know the line up to move 11 and the 12 Bxa6 e5 trick. It's also worth remembering 6 d5 g6? 7 Qd4.

Theoretical Status

7 a4 can tentatively be placed in the 'solved' basket. It's always risky to write off a line after one game, but I'll be surprised if 11...Na6 isn't the whole answer. The Dragon-style attacks with h2-h4 are theoretically nonsense, but they will always appeal to the basher.

Game 24

K.Spraggett ■ Nataf

Enghien-les-Bains 1997

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 cxd6 6 Nc3 g6 7 Bd3 Bg7 8 Nge2 (Diagram 13)

This introduces a dangerous positional system which was very fashionable in the early 1990's but has since fallen out of vogue with the rise of the Voronezh. It was the choice of the young Bobby Fischer, although later he changed sides to uphold Black's colours in the 1970 Interzonal on his way to the world championship in 1972. White's idea is the same in a way as Game 22 – he wants to take the sting out of ...Bg4 which, clearly, can now be met with f2-f3 (and ...Bf5 is prevented). Moreover the knight on e2 defends its colleague on c3 and makes possible b2-b3 or d4-d5 without needing to waste time on Rc1.

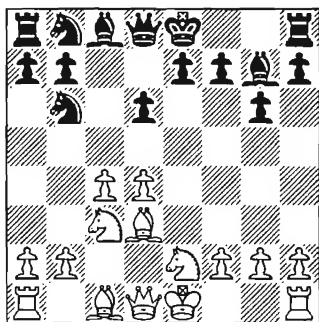


Diagram 13

Unfashionable but dangerous

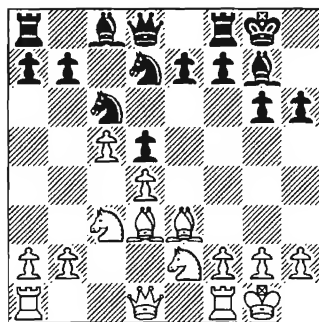


Diagram 14

Pressure on the centre

White's idea, generally speaking, is to meet ...Nc6 with d4-d5. In the structure which then arises he has no objection to his d3-bishop being removed for a knight. Almost always he will send his bishop to d4 to initiate a trade, after which his knight on d4 will usually be more than a match for Black's bishop on d7. Black's problem is that he cannot allow the pawn structure to remain as it is – if he does he will be running the risk of being crushed on the kingside – and yet the natural break ...b7-b5 is very hard to arrange with White's knights on c3 and d4, and a break with ...e7-e6 will always leave pawn weaknesses and a slightly draughty king.

Black, meanwhile, has the choice of three ways of playing. He can go for ...Nc6 and allow White the type of game described above, he can go for ...e7-e5 before playing ...Nc6 or he can adopt a ...d6-d5 plan, as Fischer did and as Nataf does in this game.

8...0-0

Or 8...Nc6 9 d5 Ne5 10 0-0 which is likely to transpose below.

9 0-0

White has an occasionally played but thematic alternative here in 9 d5, which is designed to achieve the pawn structure described above while cutting out some of Black's other ideas (such as that played in this game). Black could accept this by 9...N8d7 followed by Ne5, or he could play 9...e5 (10 dxex6 Bxe6 is feeble) but in my opinion his most logical option is 9...e6, followed by ...exd5, ...N8d7-e5, ...Re8 and so forth. I have to admit that as yet no Black player has seen it my way, though. Slower moves like 9 b3 or 9 a3 can also be met with ...d6-d5, which is not so good for White.

9...d5

If this does not appeal Black can also play 9...Nc6, although in my opinion White is somewhat better after 10 d5 Ne5 11 b3 Nxd3 12 Qxd3 Nd7

13 Be3 Nf6 (this is the best square for the knight, from which it assists both the ...b7-b5 and ...e7-e6 breaks indirectly, and prevents an immediate exchange of dark-squared bishops, leaving White a little uncertain whether bishop or knight should occupy d4). If Black does want to play this way, the plan ...Bd7, ...a7-a6, ...Qa5, ...Rfc8, as in I.Rogers-Moor, Baden 1999, where Black gave away 300 rating points and still drew handily, is probably best, giving White the problem of holding down ...b7-b5 while organizing his forces on the kingside.

Alternatively, a long-established line is 9...e5 10 Be3 (10 d5, enabling White to preserve the d3-bishop, is also possible and perhaps quite good) 10...Nc6 (or perhaps 10...f5!?) 11 d5 Nb4 12 b3 Nxd3 13 Qxd3 f5 (or 13...Re8) 14 f4 Nd7, and now Black has to be prepared to meet either 15 Rad1 or 15 Qd2 with 15...g5!?, leading to extremely sharp play on the kingside, if he wants to avoid getting positionally crushed. Otherwise after ...e5-e4 White puts his bishop on d4 and a knight on e3 and advances on the queenside, or if Black maintains the tension White will at some point take on e5 and (if Black recaptures with a piece) go for Bd4xg7 and then Nd4, or if Black recaptures with a pawn, aim to queen the 'd' and c-pawns. Black's queen's bishop is a poor piece in these lines. These positions have more in common with the King's Indian than with other variations of the Alekhine.

10 c5 N6d7 11 Bg5 h6 12 Be3 Nc6 (Diagram 14) 13 Bb5

A strange-looking move, but Black was threatening to liquidate advantageously with ...Nxc5 and ...d5-d4. 13 Nxd5 Nxc5 14 Nxe7+ Qxe7 15 dxc5 Bxb2 16 Rb1 Bg7 17 Qb3 Rd8 leads nowhere in particular, while 16 Bxh6 Rd8 17 Rb1 Be5 18 Be3 Bf5 gives Black fine compensation for the pawn

13...Nf6 14 f3

14...Ng4 was threatened.

14...Bf5 15 Qd2 Kh7 16 Ng3 Bd7 17 Rab1 Na5 18 b3 b6 19 Rfd1

Perhaps White needed to swallow his pride and take on b6, but if he does then clearly his opening has been a failure.

19...Bxb5 20 Nxb5 bxc5 21 dxc5 Rb8 22 Nc3 e6 23 Nge2 Nd7 24 f4 Qc7 25 Rdc1 Rfe8

The best move in the game, which is designed to prevent exactly what Spraggett now plays.

26 Nd4? (Diagram 15)

26...Qxc5 27 Ncb5

The point of Black's 25th was that 27 Nxe6? now loses to 27...Qe7, pinning the knight to the bishop on e3.

27...Qb6 28 Nc7 Rec8 29 Ndx6 d4 (Diagram 16)

White has been out-combined. Despite the out-of-play knight on a5 he has no way both to rescue his over-committed pieces and coordinate the ones he manages to retain.

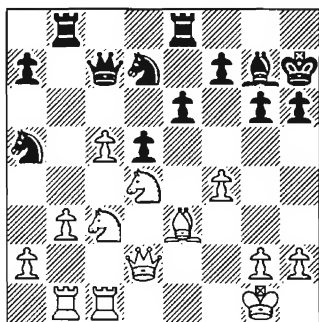


Diagram 15

White is happy to see ...Qxc5

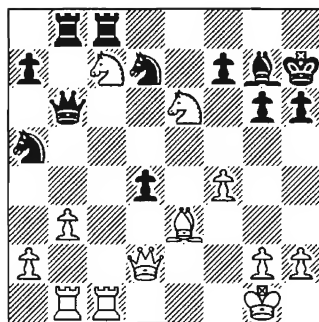


Diagram 16

The complications favour Black

30 Nxg7 dxe3 31 Qxd7 Kxg7 32 Kf1

Or 32 Nd5 Rxc1+ 33 Rxc1 Qd4.

32...Rd8 33 Qe7 Rd2 34 Qe5+ Kg8 35 b4 Qb7 36 Nd5 Rxd5 0-1

Statistics

Worrying. White has scored 62% and this rises to 66% in the lines with 9...Nc6. With 9...e5 Black has done much better, scoring 45%, and with 9...d5 Black has a considerable plus score, but from a small sample.

Theoretical?

If you want to play an ...e7-e5 or ...Nc6 plan then knowing the correct placement of the pieces and what White is trying to do is more important than specific moves. The ...d5 plan is trickier and at least an idea of the tactics hanging around at move 13 or so is vital.

Theoretical Status

Not many games, but White hasn't got to grips with this 9...d5 plan yet in the way he has with the older lines. 9...Nc6 gives White a stable advantage and this doesn't seem set to change. 9...e5 10 Be3 has been considered okay for Black for some time, although he needs to be willing to accept very sharp play. 10 d5 would trouble me more in this line.

Game 25

□ D.Coleman ■ Hillarp-Persson

Copenhagen 1999

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 cxd6 6 Nc3 g6 7 Be3 Bg7 8 Rc1 0-0 9 b3 (Diagram 17)

This is it. The dreaded Voronezh variation. Voronezh, by the way, is a town in Siberia. The line was invented by the citizens of this fair burg – and in particular world correspondence champion Grigory Sanakoev – in the mid-to-late 1980's, and gradually seeped out into the West around the mid-1990's.

Hopefully, after the previous games we can now see White's idea. He is very well prepared for 9...Nc6. Just as in the last game he will meet that with 10 d5 Ne5 but this time there isn't even a bishop on d3 for the knight to be traded for, and White will follow up in due course with f2-f4, driving the poor beast back to d7, where it prevents Black from developing his queen's bishop or recycling the b6-knight to somewhere useful. This has scored terribly for Black. Meanwhile White has also prevented 9...d5, which is now senseless – 10 c5 is already winning material. Note that 9...d5 10 c5 Nc4 would have been the answer to 9 Be2.

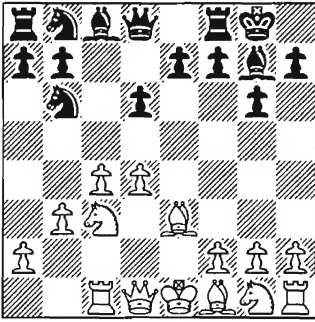


Diagram 17
The Voronezh

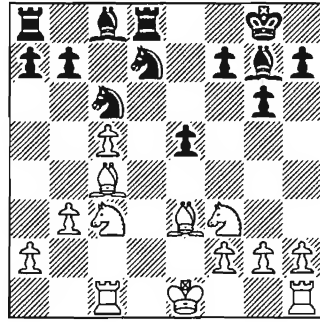


Diagram 18
An important theoretical position

Black has toyed with 9...f5!? 10 g3 and 9...Bf5, while Davies suggests 9...e6 and/or 9...Bd7, but the next is the main line.

9...e5

Davies is wonderfully snuffy about this move – 'It could be that someone like Baburin will eventually show how Black can draw' – but I think Black has decent enough play.

10 dxe5 dxe5 11 Qxd8

White can also play 11 c5 N6d7 12 Bc4 when 12...Nc6 13 Nf3 Qa5 leads to a raft of complicated old theory, probably quite good for White, but Baburin's excellent 12...Qa5 seems to have put this line out of business. The point is that 13 Nf3 is not good because of 13...e4 14 Nd4 Nxc5, so White has to develop with 13 Ne2 when 13...Nc6 (and not 13...Nxc5? 14 Qd5, which leaves Black in trouble) 14 a3 Nd4 15 Nxd4 exd4 16 Bxd4 Re8+ 17 Kf1 Bxd4 18 Qxd4 Qxa3, while still

very complicated, seems to be good for Black

11...Rxd8 12 c5

This is White's prepared way to meet 9...e5. He drives the knight back to d7, where it blocks most of Black's pieces, since 12...Nd5? loses to 13 Rd1 Be6 14 Bc4. 12 Nb5 is refuted by 12...Nc6 13 Nxa7 Nd4! etc.

12...N6d7 13 Bc4 Nc6 14 Nf3 (Diagram 18)

14 Ne4 is also supposed to be slightly better for White after 14...Nf8 15 Nd6 (or 15 Bg5 Rd7 16 Nf6+ Bxf6 17 Bxf6 Rc7 18 Nf3 Bf5) 15...Ne6 16 Nf3 Ncd4 17 Ng5 Nxc5 18 Bxc5 Rd7, but as long as Black continues with the key manoeuvre ...Rc7, ...Be6 I don't think he has too much to fear.

The diagram position is key to the variation and arises most of the time after 9...e5. White's active pieces and pressure against f7 are evident. He also has the prospect of Ne4-d6 and/or b3-b4 to cement his pawn wedge on the queenside, followed by pushing Black backwards over the edge of the board. Black needs to shift the d7-knight. The most natural plan, perhaps, is to send it to f8 and e6 to target d4, but many games have featured this plan pitted against White's ideas described above, and the verdict is unequivocal – Black is too slow. Instead he needs to find a plan which both breaks White's queenside formation and frees his knight from d7, and happily there is one available.

14...Na5

An essential link in the plan. The immediate 14...b6 allows 15 Bd5 Bb7 16 Ne4, which is extremely unpleasant.

15 Be2

The original idea of the Voronezh group was 15 Bg5, which was what Sanakoev played when he first introduced this line. However White has got nowhere against 15...Rf8. White's idea is 16 Be7 and now rather than 16...Re8 17 Nd5 with an initiative for White, Black should shatter White's pawns with 16...Nxc4. According to Sanakoev White can still retain a slight advantage after 17 bxc4, although I don't see why after 17...Re8 18 Nd5 e4 19 Ng5 b6. In practice White has generally grabbed the exchange with 17 Bxf8 Kxf8 18 bxc4 Nxc5 19 0-0 e4 20 Ng5 Nd3, but White can at best draw here (21 Rc2 Nb4 22 Rcc1 Nd3 and so on) while Black can decide whether to play on (with 21...f5, for example).

15...b6

White is meant to be better here, but I believe this is the answer to the Voronezh.

16 cxb6

Usually 16 Na4 is recommended. This is based on a game where Black incautiously played 16...bxc5, no doubt expecting the routine 17 Nxc5, and was instead met by 17 0-0!. Black could in fact have avoided this position with 16...Nxc5 17 Nxc5 bxc5 18 Rxc5 Nb7 when he is fine, the best plan against most replies being to send the b7-

knight via d6 to f5. White in his turn, though, can force it with 16 0-0, when Black hardly has better than 16...bxc5 17 Na4. But anyway 17...Nc6! is fine for Black, e.g. 18 Nxc5 Nxc5 19 Bxc5 Bb7. White can also play the slightly alarming-looking 16 b4 Nc6 17 b5 Nd4 18 c6 Nc5 but Black can break up the pawn mass with ...a7-a6 and equalise; 19 Bc4 Be6 20 Bxe6? Nd3+ is an important point.

16...Nxb6 17 Nb5 Bb7 18 0-0

18 Nxa7 Nd5 gives Black good play.

18...Nd5 19 Bg5

19 Rfd1 Nxe3 20 fxe3 e4 21 Nfd4 Bf8 is fine too, while 19 Bxa7? Nf4 is already very good for Black.

19...Rd7 20 Rfd1 a6 21 Na3

The problem with White retaining his bishop with 19 Bg5 is that now 21 Nc3? loses a piece to 21...Nxc3 22 Rxc3 Rxd1+ 23 Bxd1 e4, so the knight is forced to this poor square.

21...e4 22 Ne1??

22 Nd4 Nb4 was already quite unpleasant for White but the text loses material to a neat sequence.

22...Bb2 23 Rc5 Bxa3 24 Rxa5 Bb4 25 Ra4 Bxe1 26 Rxe1 Nc3 27 Bg4 Rd5 28 Bf6 Nxa4 29 bxa4 Rd2 30 Rc1 e3 0-1

Statistics

Black has scored 36% in the Voronezh as a whole and 42% after 9...e5, but I think this reflects the fact Black players haven't yet got round to the right plan. If you don't believe me, according to my Barbican team-mate Dave Coleman, Tiger Hillarp-Persson was extremely confident about Black's position in the post mortem.

Theoretical?

I fear so, yes. Given that it has been recommended in a very popular repertoire book, you are very likely to meet this line in practice. Black really needs to know up to move 15 of the main line. To be fair, the first eight moves are routine, and most of the next few are recaptures, so that isn't quite as bad as it sounds. If learning by heart isn't your thing, keep in mind that the key idea is to get rid of the d7-knight and break White's pawn phalanx. It's also worth trying to remember Baburin's 12...Qa5.

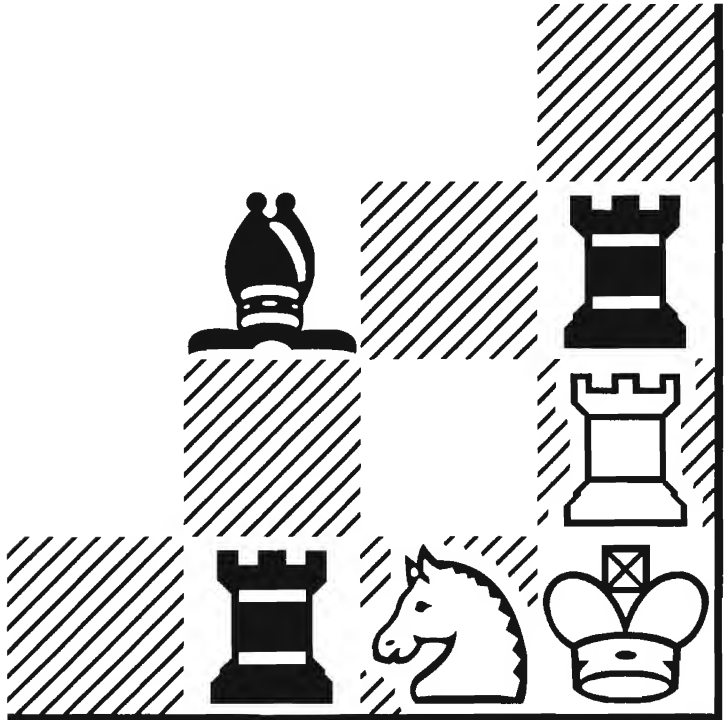
Theoretical Status

Canonised by previous writers and supposedly has the ...cxd6 Exchange Variation in crisis for Black. I don't believe this... make up your own mind.

Chapter Five

Exchange Variation with 5...exd6

- ▨ Introduction
- ▨ Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 exd6 introduces a different kind of game from 5...cxd6. Here Black is content with a symmetrical structure. On the whole, this line is more solid than recapturing with the c-pawn but in so being offers Black less potential for counterplay.

White has a very similar range of ideas available to the previous chapter: straightforward development (Game 26), development with a more cunning order (Game 27), a Bd3/Nge2 system (Game 28) and various lunatic attacking ideas (Game 29).

As for Black, there is really only one pawn structure decision – whether or not to play ...d6-d5. The typical development runs along the lines of ...Bg4/f5, ...Be7-f6, ...0-0, ...Re8 and either ...Nc6 or ...c7-c6.

Illustrative Games

Game 26

□ Gipslis ■ Larsen

Sousse 1967

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 exd6 (Diagram 1)

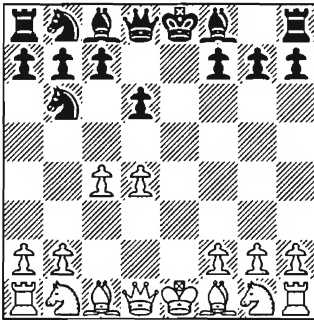


Diagram 1
Modest development

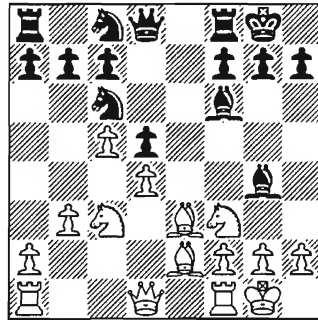


Diagram 2
What next?

6 Nc3 Be7

Black would quite like to develop with ...g7-g6 and ...Bg7 but 6...g6 7 Nf3 Bg7 8 Bg5 is irritating.

7 Nf3 0-0 8 Be2 Nc6 9 Be3 Bg4 10 b3

Black was threatening 10...Bxf3 11 Bxf3 Nxc4. After 10 d5 Bxf3 11 Bxf3 Ne5 White is forced to play 12 b3 and thus cannot retain his bishop – 12...Bg5 13 Bb2 Nxf3+ 14 Qxf3 Bf6 is equal.

10...Bf6 11 0-0

11 h3 Be6 12 Ne4 (or the immediate 11 Ne4) leads to a similar game where Black is slightly less cramped but, on the other hand, White has the two bishops.

11...d5

Black can also – and perhaps should – delay this with 11...Re8 12 Rc1 d5, since d4-d5 is not possible until c3 is guarded. Having said that the rook can also be useful on the f-file (see the note to White's thirteenth) and White's Rc1 is useful inasmuch as it discourages ...b7-b6, so it is not clear that this trade-off favours Black...

12 c5 Nc8 (Diagram 2) 13 b4

According to Larsen this is a bad move as White is not achieving anything dramatic with b4-b5. It might be different if Black's bishop were not on g4, where it has the prospect of removing the f3-knight and drawing the bishop from its defence of c4. Instead many games have continued 13 h3 Be6 (best as 13...Bxf3 14 Bxf3 leaves White better – his plan should be to advance on the kingside – and 13...Bf5 simply loses a tempo because g2-g4 is usually part of White's plans since it is useful to prevent ...Nf5, and a general kingside pawn advance is White's most dangerous approach in this line) 14 Qd2. Black's best is either 14...N8e7 or 14...g6. The idea of the latter option is that Black is concerned about 14...N8e7 15 g4 (threatening g4-g5) 15...g6 16 Ne1 Bg7 17 f4 f5 18 g5, gaining a great deal of space, and now intends, by saving the tempo of ...N8e7, to meet this plan with 14...g6 15 g4 Bg7 16 Ne1 f5 when White has no time for 17 g5 in view of 17...f4, and thus has to moderate his ambitions on the kingside. These lines are typical; Black usually has to meet White's kingside advance either with ...f7-f5 or ...h7-h6 and ...g6-g5 in this line.

13...N8e7 14 b5 Na5

No doubt Gipslis had played 13 b4 in order to be able to play b4-b5 when e7 was occupied and thus force this knight here but, if this was the case, the piece's future career must have disappointed him.

15 h3 Bxf3

Of course: now Black can send his knight to c4 after the recapture. White's queenside adventure has ruled out the normal plan of a kingside advance.

16 Bxf3 c6 (Diagram 3)

Black is already better according to Larsen. As he points out, Black has no weakness, but White does – d4.

17 Qd3 Nc4 18 Bf4 Ng6 19 Bh2 Bg5!

A fine move. As Larsen explains, although his bishop may be formally better than White's, it needs to be traded to let the Black queen go to f6 and knight to f4. Black might also need to put a rook on b8 at some point.

20 bxc6 bxc6 21 Bd1 Bf4 22 Bc2?

According to Larsen 21 Bd1 was a fine move whose object ought to have been to bring the bishop to b3 to chase away the knight.

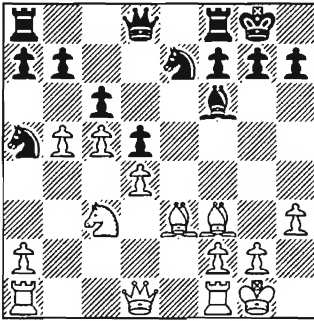


Diagram 3

The d4-pawn might prove weak

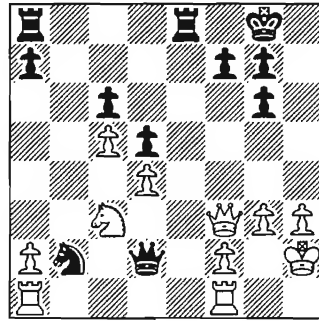


Diagram 4

The d4-pawn falls

22...Bxh2+ 23 Kxh2 Qf6 24 g3 Rfe8 25 Kg2

By now 25 Bb3 could be answered with 25...Rad8, but the text overlooks some tactics.

25...Qg5 26 Kh2?

The vile 26 f4 Qe7 was forced.

26...Nb2! 27 Qf3 Qd2! 28 Bxg6 hxg6 (Diagram 4)

And there goes the d-pawn. 28 Rab1 Rab8 changes nothing.

29 Nd1 Nc4 30 Qc3 Rab8 31 Rc1 Re4 32 Rc2 Qxd4 33 Qxd4 Rxd4 34 Re1 a5!

Fine play. 34...Rb5 35 Re8+ Kh7 36 Ne3 Rxc5 37 Re7 is no doubt winning but, as usual, it is more effective not to allow such counterplay.

35 Kg2 a4 36 Nc3 a3 37 Na4 g5 38 Re7 Rb4 39 Nb6 Rb2 40 Rc3 Rxa2 41 Nxc4 dxc4 42 Rc7 Rdd2 43 Rf3 c3 0-1

44 R3xf7 Rxf2+ 45 Rxf2 Rxf2+ and ...c3-c2 queens. A classy game, and exactly the sort of thing Black aims for with ...exd6.

Statistics

Black has scored about 46%.

Theoretical?

Not really.

Theoretical Status

Extremely solid. White definitely needs a more cunning approach.

Game 27

□ Adams ■ Baburin

Kilkenny 1997

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 exd6 6 Nc3 Be7 7 h3
(Diagram 5)

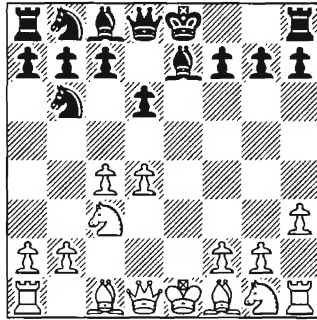


Diagram 5

White protects the g4-square

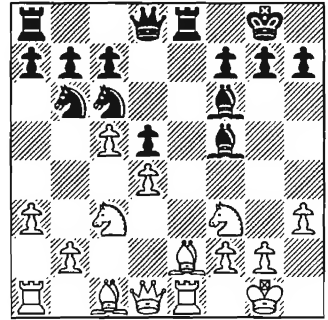


Diagram 6

Decision time for the knight

Just as in the ...exd6 line, White wants to prevent Black's development of the bishop on g4.

7... 0-0 8 Nf3 Bf5

8...c5 is an alternative.

9 Be2 Bf6 10 0-0 Re8

10...Nc6 is normal, with play similar to the previous game. Another plan for White after 10...Nc6 – quite an annoying one, indeed – is 11 d5 Ne5 12 Nd4 followed by b2-b3 and Be3 with a space advantage that is very difficult to shake. As Baburin – who has great experience with this system – explains in his notes, he wanted to try out a new plan. Black can also proceed with 10...c6/a5/Na6 or with 10...N8d7 followed by ...c7-c6 and ...Re8, as in Serper-Dreev, Sochi 1986, waiting for a more convenient moment at which to play ...d6-d5.

11 Re1

Baburin's ideas were to meet 11 b3 with 11...c5 12 Be3 Nc6 13 Rc1, or 11 Be3 with 11...d5 12 c5 Nc4 13 Qb3 Nxe3 14 fxe3 Rxe3 15 Qxb7 Nd7. Neither has been tested.

11...Nc6 12 a3

With the two rook moves to the e-file included White needs to prevent ...Nb4 like this, which must surely help Black, although a2-a3 may have a positive side by supporting a later b2-b4.

12...d5 13 c5 (Diagram 6) 13...Nc8

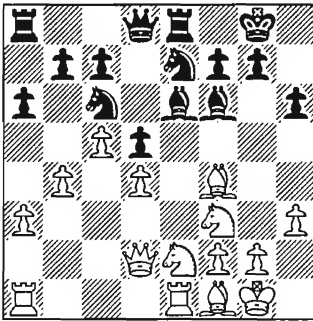
Later Baburin preferred 13...Nc4 14 b3 N4a5 15 Be3 b6.

14 Bf4 a6

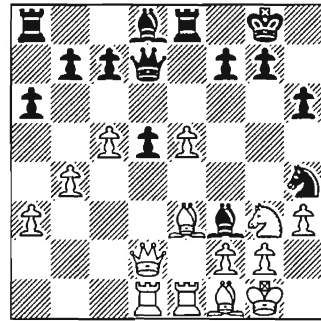
14...b6 meets with 15 Bb5 but why Baburin rejected 14...N8e7 I'm not quite sure. The obvious try is 15 Nb5 Rc8 16 g4 Be4 17 g5 Ng6 18 Bxc7 Rxc7 19 Nxc7 Qxc7 20 gxf6 Qf4 but Black's compensation here seems to be at least as good as in the note to White's sixteenth move, below.

15 Qd2 N8e7 16 Bf1

White could have won a piece here with 16 g4 Be4 17 g5 Ng6 18 gxf6 Qxf6 19 Be5 Qf5, which Baburin says is unclear, although I don't think computers would agree. I suspect there was an element of bluff here – this was a game played at a relatively quick time limit. Apparently Adams rejected this almost immediately, displaying a pragmatism which proved its value in the game.

16...h6 17 b4 Be6 18 Ne2 (Diagram 7)**Diagram 7**

The knight relocates to the kingside

**Diagram 8**

Crafty

18...Ng6

18...Nf5 looks thematic but blocks the e6-bishop and achieves little.

19 Be3 Bf5

Now that the knight has left c3 Black returns to the idea of ...Be4. Baburin mentions the quiet 19...Qd7 as the alternative.

20 Rad1 Qd7 21 Ng3 Be4 22 Nh2! Nh4 23 Ng4 Bd8 24 Ne5?!

An oversight; 24 Bf4 was better.

24...Nxe5 25 dxe5 Bf3! (Diagram 8)

Without this Black would be in trouble, but now the game is unclear.

26 Rc1 Rxe5 27 Bxh6 Rxe1 28 Rxe1 d4

28...gxh6 29 Qxh6 Be4 30 Nxe4 dxe4 31 Rxe4 Ng6 32 Bc4 was hopeless. After the text Black is still in the game, but the clock was becoming the decisive factor.

29 Bg5 Bc6 30 Bxd8 Rxd8 31 Qg5 Ng6?

Baburin says that 31...d3 was better and implies that Black then stands well. He gives the splendid line 32 b5 (to prepare 32 Qxh4 which, if played at once, loses to 32...d2 33 Rd1 Ba4) 32...d2 33 bxc6 dxe1N! 34 Qxh4 bxc6 and Black wins. He doesn't say, however, how he would have met 32 Bxd3. 32...Qxd3 seems to be forced (32...Nf3+ 33 gxf3 Qxd3 34 Nf5 g6 35 Re6!, and 32...Nxc2 33 Nf5 g6 34 Re7 Qxd3 35 Nh6+ and mates, are both out of the question) and after 33 Qxh4 Black faces an uphill struggle so far as I can see.

32 h4?

This serves only to lose a tempo and 32 Bc4 was stronger. White's attack is very dangerous then, for example 32...Bb5 33 Bb3 Kf8 34 Nf5 d3 35 Re7 Qxe7 36 Nxe7 Nxe7 37 Qf4 Nd5 38 Qe5 Nf6 (38...d2 39 Qd4 rounds up the d-pawn) 39 Qxc7 etc.

32...d3 33 Rd1 d2 34 Bc4

White is worse and possibly lost, but with this move Adams instantly rejected a draw offer.

34...Qd4

Baburin correctly rejects 34...Ba4 35 Qxg6 Kf8 (35...Bxd1 36 Nf5) 36 Qh7 with a decisive attack, but this move cost him half of the two minutes he had left to finish the whole game.

35 h5 Ne5??

35...Qh4? 36 Bxf7+ was another way to lose, but after 35...Nh4 Black is doing well, e.g. 36 Nf1 Bxg2 37 Nxd2 Bf3 (I suspect 37...Bc6 is better) 38 Re1 Qg4+ (38...Qxd2? 39 Bxf7+ wins) 39 Qxg4 Bxg4.

36 Nf5 Qg4 37 Nh6+ 1-0

A great scrap which shows Adams' tremendous practical strength.

Statistics/Theoretical?/Theoretical Status

Much the same as Game 26. The many move orders make the statistics an unreliable guide in this line, and in any case this system throws the main weight of the struggle into understanding of the quiet middlegame.

Game 28

□ Emms ■ Davies

Southend 2002

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 exd6 6 Nc3 Be7

Assuming that White wants to adopt the system shown in this game, there are some move order issues already. For example, at this point Black may choose 6...Nc6 to prevent 7 Bd3. White can try 7 d5 Ne5 but 8 f4 Ned7 9 Qd4 now seems to be weak – 9...Be7 10 Qxg7 Bf6 11 Qg4 Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 Qf6 13 Bd2 Nc5 gives Black excellent compensation for his pawn. The more sensible 7 Nf3 Bg4 8 Be2 Be7 9 d5 Bxf3 10 Bxf3 Ne5 11 Be2 0-0 produces a position which Baburin has been

happy to defend, although the textbooks consider it a little better for White. Black's plan is ...Bf6, ...a7-a5, ...Ne5-d7-c5, ...Re8 and so forth, although it does seem that White will always be a little better. While Black has little positive to keep him warm, the advantage of the two bishops is mitigated by the strength of Black's king's bishop, and if this is exchanged for its counterpart the remaining white bishop is not a great piece. Alternatively Black could try 7...Be7, when 8 d5 Ne5 9 Nxe5 dxe5 10 Be2 0-0 11 0-0 f5 produces a fighting game, although Richard Palliser assures me he had the better of the draw in Palliser-Miles, Scarborough 2001. Returning to move 7 after 6 Nc3 Nc6, White could also think about 7 h3, returning to the system in Game 27. Black's early ...Nc6 is not the most flexible way to tackle that, and in particular the d4-d5/Nd4 plan mentioned in the notes to Black's tenth in Game 27 gains in strength. White might try 6 Bd3 when Black can then try to cross White's plans with 6...Nc6 7 Ne2 (7 Nf3 Bg4 is annoying) 7...Nb4 which wins the two bishops, or perhaps 7...g6 now that White cannot arrange Bg5.

7 Bd3 (Diagram 9)

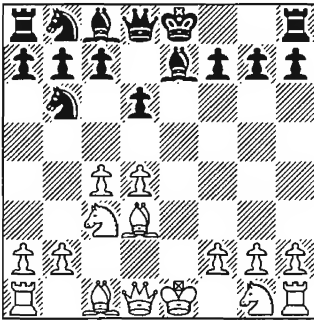


Diagram 9
Preparing Nge2

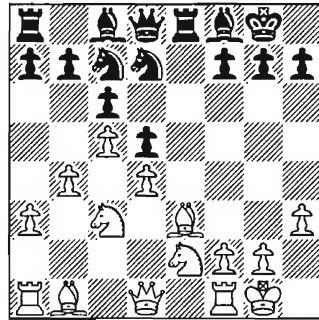


Diagram 10
Has White made progress?

A trendy system, recommended by both Emms and Davies in their books, which gives the present encounter a certain piquancy. White's plan with Bd3 and Nge2 is again directed against Black's queen's bishop, which is to be prevented from going to f5 and from pinning the knight (thanks to f2-f3) should it venture to g4.

7...0-0 8 Nge2 Nc6 9 0-0 Re8

The traditional methods are to seek the exchange of the d3-bishop either by 9...Bf6 10 Be3 Nb4 11 b3 Nxd3 12 Qxd3 Bg4 13 f3 Bh5 14 Ng3 Bg6 or 9...Bg4 10 f3 Bh5 11 Nf4 Bg6 12 Bxg6 hxg6 13 d5. In either case Black has a defensive task ahead of him, although there is no reason for him to lose. Note how White makes no great effort in either line to preserve his king's bishop – in the structure after d4-d5 this is

not his most effective minor piece.

10 b3

Davies had recommended 9...Re8 in his book, so we can imagine that Emms was ready for it. The text is better than the previously played 10 a3 – White has no need to preserve the bishop. After that move Black can play 10...Bf6 11 Be3 Bg4 (or at once ...g7-g6, perhaps followed by ...Ne7-f5) 12 Qc2 g6 13 h3 (13 f3?? Rxe3 is one of the points of 9...Re8) 13...Bxe2 14 Nxe2 Bg5 15 d5 (15 Qd2!?) Nb8! (to ensure the exchange of dark-squared bishops) when Black drew easily in Shaw-Davies, 4NCL 2002.

10...Bf8

Black could follow a similar plan to Shaw-Davies, although 10 b3 may enable White to repserve his dark-squared bishop by developing it on b2, but Davies prefers a different approach.

11 h3 Nb4 12 Be3 c6 13 Bb1

Again neither side is terribly bothered about the possibility of ...Nxd3.

13...d5 14 a3 Na6 15 c5 Nd7 16 b4 Nc7 (Diagram 10)

It looks as though White has achieved his usual space advantage, but in fact Black has organized himself rather well.

17 Bd3 b6

This move is needed to prevent b4-b5 by exerting pressure on c5.

18 Qb3 Ne6 19 Rfd1 a6 20 cxb6 Nxb6 21 Na4 Nxa4 22 Qxa4 Bd7 23 Nf4 g6!

Another instructive move, designed, as Davies says, to prevent the exchange of his 'bad' queen's bishop by Nxe6 Rxe6, Bf5. As often happens in the QGD Exchange variation, Black needs his bad bishop to defend his good pawns.

24 Nxe6 Rxe6 25 Qc2 Bd6 ½-½

An unexciting draw, but a significant encounter. Black's 17th and 24th moves are instructive.

Game 29

□ E.Berg ■ J.Ericsson

Skara 2002

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 exd6 6 Nc3 Be7 7 Qf3 (Diagram 11)

A very aggressive system, although probably not that good. It can also be introduced with 6 Qf3, although 6...Nc6 7 Be3 Qh4 is then disruptive, so usually White waits until move 7. Once again White is concentrating his fire on Black's poor queen's bishop, which is to be barred from g4 and f5.

7...Nc6

7...0-0 8 Be3 c6 followed by ...d6-d5 and (after c4-c5) ...b7-b6 is another solution.

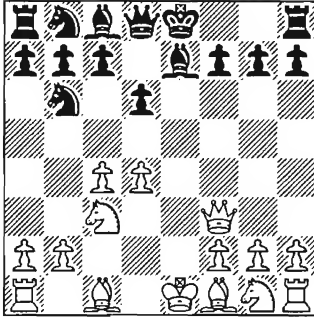


Diagram 11
White clears the way for 0-0-0

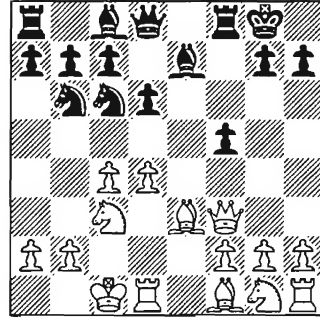


Diagram 12
Uncompromising play from Black

8 Be3 0-0 9 0-0-0 f5 (Diagram 12)

Black can also play 9...Be6 at once with similar play – and frequently does – but I like the space-grabbing text. 9...Bg5 10 Nh3 Bxe3+ 11 fxe3 Qh4 12 g3 Qg4 is also fine.

10 g3

Berg had played the alternative 10 c5 before (this is a common theme in this system, driving the knight to d7 to block the bishop) but a month before this game had run into 10...f4! (10...Nd7 is good also) 11 cxb6 fxe3 12 bxc7 Qxc7 13 Qd5+ (13 Qxe3 Nb4 14 Kd2 Rxf2+ 15 Qxf2 Bg5+ 16 Ke1 Qe7+ 17 Be2 Nc2+ and perpetual is a pretty line, or a good illustration of why computers are ruining the game, depending on your point of view) 13...Kh8 14 fxe3 Bf5 15 Nf3 Nb4, and had been forced to bale out with 16 Qc4 Qxc4 17 Bxc4 Rac8 18 Be2 Nxa2+ with a fairly equal position (16 Qb3 a5 is dangerous). The untried 10 Nh3 is also worth thinking about.

10...Be6 11 b3

After 11 c5 Black should be brave and go 11...Nc4 with good play.

11...Qc8

Directed against 12 c5, which can be met by ...dxc5 and ...Nd7-e5.

12 Nge2 a5 (Diagram 13) 13 a4

13 d5 Ne5 14 Qg2 Bf7 15 Nf4 has been suggested as better for White, but I doubt it. White's king looks decidedly shaky to me, and White's fianchettoed queen is hardly radiating power.

13...Bf6 14 Nf4 Bf7 15 h4 Nb4 16 Bh3 c5 17 Nfe2 exd4 (Diagram 14) 18 Bxf5

This loses, but I don't think the grandmaster blundered – rather he didn't fancy the headlines that might have been made after 18 Bxd4 Bxd4 19 Nxd4 Nxc4 20 bxc4 Qxc4. White is already in grave difficulty.

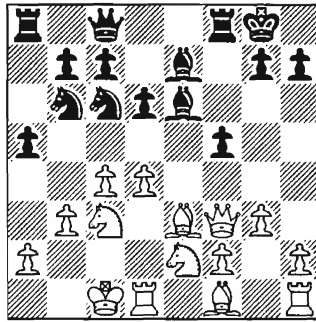


Diagram 13
Now Black switches flanks

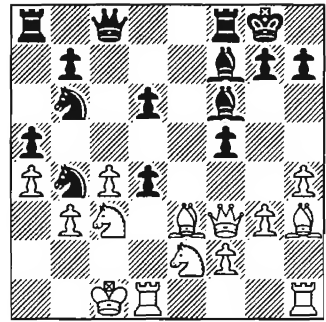


Diagram 14
Opening the c-file

18...Be6 19 Bxe6 Qxe6 20 Rxd4

20 Bxd4 Bxd4 21 Nxd4 Rxf3 22 Nxe6 Rxc3+ and Black wins.

20...Bxd4 21 Nxd4 Qg6

A good move. Black is not in fact winning as easily as all that now that his attacking momentum is spent.

22 Qe4 Nd3+ 23 Kd2 Nxf2 24 Qxg6 hxg6 25 Rc1 Rae8 26 Ndb5 Nc8 27 Nc7 Ne4+ 28 Nxe4 Rxe4 29 Kd3 Re7 30 Nd5 Rd7 31 Bf4 Ne7 32 Nxe7+ Rxe7 33 Kd4 Rf5 34 Rc3 Re1?

Black has played sensibly and is winning, but no doubt the earlier complications had led to time trouble, and these GMs can be damned elusive. 34...Re6 was better planning to bring the king to the centre.

35 Rd3 Re6 36 Kc3 Rff6 37 Rd5 Rf5 38 Rd4 Rff6 39 Rd5 Rf5 40 Rd4 Rff6 ½-½

A disappointing end, but since Black was playing up by 220 ELO points against an expert in this line, he couldn't have been too sad.

Statistics

White has scored 53%.

Theoretical?

A bit. It's helpful to have an answer in mind.

Theoretical Status

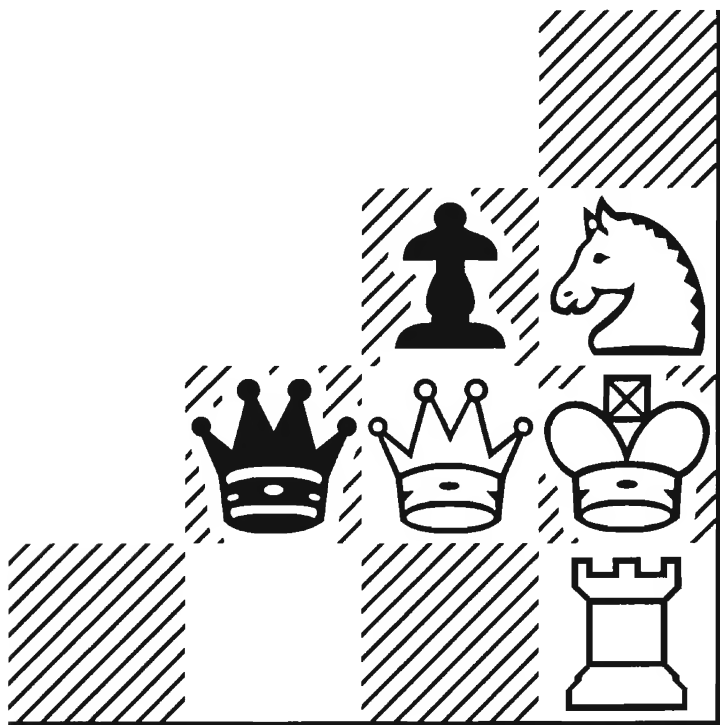
Caused panic for a while but I think Black has the hang of it now.

Chapter Six

Four Pawns Attack

 Introduction

 Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 f4 (Diagram 1)

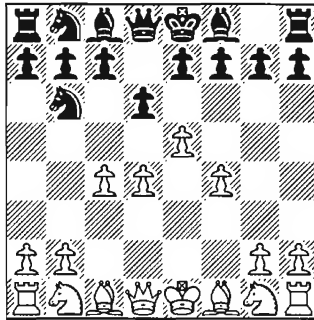


Diagram 1

White's broad pawn centre

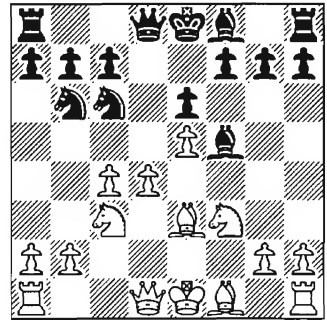


Diagram 2

A popular position

The Four Pawns Attack is the Alekhine Defence equivalent of the King's Gambit – to quote John Emms: it doesn't matter how long you've been playing the opening, that lunge with the f-pawn still sends a shiver down your spine. White's idea is agreeably simple: he is going to hold on to the cramping pawn on e5 and attempt to batter his way to the full point. Nevertheless, Black has an equal share of the fun and several ways, according to taste, of obtaining a reasonable game. ('When I saw 4 c4, I knew what the next move would be. 5 f4 is not something top players go in for' – Alexander Baburin, commenting on his game with Adams – Game 27. He was right – 5 exd6!)

5...dxe5

Black has various more or less lunatic alternatives at this point, including the absurd-looking 5...g5, which does have its own crazy logic and is not half as simple to refute as it looks. This is covered in Game 34, with 5...g6 and Alex Wohl's 5...c5!? in the notes. It is also possible to play 5...Bf5, which is part of some important transpositional tricks which are covered in the notes to Game 32.

6 fxe5 Nc6

6...c5 is a fascinating alternative with various semi-respectable ideas in mind – this is covered in Game 33.

7 Be3

7 Nf3 is much less good as Black is able to apply immediate pressure with 7...Bg4. White may then venture 8 e6?! but Black can simply take this with the f-pawn and develop via ...g7-g6 and so on. This is why Black usually plays 6...Nc6 before...Bf5: he wants to force Be3.

7...Bf5 8 Nc3

8 Nf3 Nb4 forces the undesirable 9 Na3.

8...e6 9 Nf3 (Diagram 2)

Both sides have developed naturally and this position is the starting point for much of the theory. White may of course carry on developing, but now that he has e5 and d5 covered he is also ready to lunge with d4-d5 followed by Nd4. Black has several moves here which are designed to prevent that. In fact 9...Bb4, 9...Bg4, Alekhine's original 9...Nb4 and even 9...Qd7 (via various obscure tactical ambushes) all do this, albeit with different degrees of theoretical approval. These are all covered in Game 31. The main line, however, has long been...

9...Be7

...and that is the move we focus on in Game 30. This does not prevent 10 d5 – on the contrary it challenges White to play it if he wants to seek an advantage. It must be said at the outset that although Black has decent chances theoretically this is not a comfortable solution for the casual player. The positions which arise are complex and well-analysed, at least in areas (people were swapping innovations on move 23 in early 1970's Cambridge circles). Black has to tread a narrow path, and for a rare line like the Four Pawns Attack a reply which leads to less explored play might be preferable. Moreover there are a couple of virtually forced draws lurking in the notes to Game 30.

Illustrative Games

Game 30

□ Hoskyn ■ Dive

New Zealand Correspondence Championship 1997

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 Nc6 7 Be3 Bf5 8 Nc3 e6 9 Nf3 Be7 (Diagram 3)

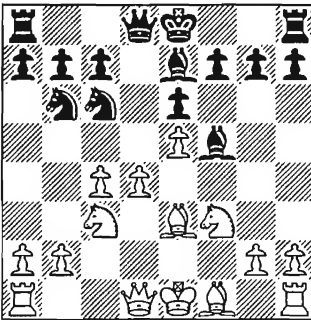


Diagram 3

Black provokes d4-d5

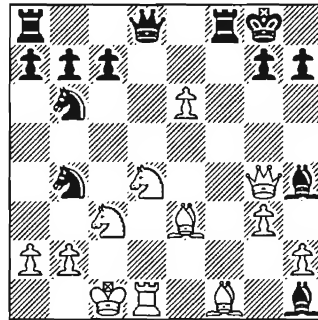


Diagram 4

Calmly does it...

10 d5

White can play more tamely at this point with 10 Be2. The usual sequence after this, which has been played in many games, is 10...0-0 11 0-0 f6 12 exf6 (the decentralizing 12 Nh4 is not worth it but Black has to find 12...fxe5 13 Nxf5 exf5 14 d5 Nd4!, when 15 Bxd4 exd4 16 Qxd4 Nd7 gives him dangerous play on the dark squares; 12 a3 fxe5 13 d5 e4 is also good for Black) 12...Bxf6 13 Qd2 Qe7 (the best place for the queen; Black would not wish for an exchange of the dark-squared bishops, and this move enables him to meet 14 Bg5? with 14...Bxg5 15 Nxc5 Nxd4) 14 Rad1 Rad8. Korchnoi declared in *Chess Is My Life* that White stood better here, but in fact practice has shown that Black is fine. His next few moves will typically be ...h7-h6 (ruling out Bg5 once and for all) ...Kh8 (the king is safer here in the event of d4-d5) ...Bh7 (also directed against d4-d5 followed by Nd4) and ...Rfe8, in some order or other. Black then has everything organized, his e-pawn is no weaker than White's d-pawn, and he can consider such ideas as ...Rd7/Red8, ...Qf7 (if a white rook comes to the e-file) and perhaps ...Nc8-d6, improving his worst piece. The main pitfall to beware is playing ...e6-e5 prematurely – for some reason in many games Black has miscalculated and made this central break in positions where it loses.

10...exd5

The older 10...Nb4 leads to spectacular play after either 11 Rc1 or 11 Nd4. The consensus is that White is better, and although the last word probably has not been said I have not presented the material in view of the soundness of the text.

11 cxd5 Nb4

The only sensible square.

12 Nd4

12 Bxb6 (or a move earlier) had a period of popularity but it is not a terribly good idea. The point is to remove the threat to the d-pawn so that after 12...axb6 13 Nd4 if Black plays as in the main game with 13...Bd7 he is hit with the strong 14 a3!, driving the knight away and consolidating. Instead of falling for this Black can either venture Bernard Cafferty's cute and untried 13...Be4, with the point that 14 Nxe4 Qxd5 forks the two knights (...Qxd4, Qxd4 Nc2+), or play the well-tested 13...Bg6. The main difference from the text is that 14 Bb5+ c6 15 dxc6 0-0 16 cxb7 Rb8 (or 16...Ra5) is now good for Black due to the exchange of his poor knight on b6 for the valuable dark-squared bishop. After 14 d6 all of 14...Bxd6, 14...0-0 and 14...Bh4+ lead to complications in which White is supposed to be struggling, and certainly White has abandoned this line in recent years.

12...Bd7

For a move which virtually loses, 12...Bg6? has been surprisingly popular. 13 Bb5+ then forces either an inadequate pawn sacrifice with 13...c6 14 dxc6 0-0 15 cxb7 or the miserable 13...Kf8 14 0-0 Kg8,

after which Black will have to play the rest of the game without his king's rook.

13 e6

White was at the crossroads. The d-pawn is en prise, so there are two reasonable alternatives, namely 13 Qb3 and 13 Qf3. The latter lost a great deal of popularity after White was rent limb from limb in the splendid game Pegoraro-Henderson, Ischia 1996, which proceeded 13...c5 14 dxc6 (forced in view of the threat of ...Nc2+ if the d4-knight moves) 14...bxc6 (14...Nxc6 looks good until you see 15 e6! fxe6 16 Bd3 catching Black's king horribly in the centre) 15 e6 (15 a3 c5! 16 axb4 cxd4 17 Bxd4 0-0! – and not 17...Bxb4 18 e6!; 15...N4d5 16 Nxd5 Nxd5 17 Bc4 is more dangerous with the d4-knight still alive)

TIP: In this variation Black frequently uses the counterattack on the d4-knight to avoid having his own knight driven away from b4.

15...fxe6 16 0-0-0 (now 16 a3 N4d5 is the better move since after 16...c5? 17 axb4 cxd4 18 Bxd4 Black cannot castle) 16...N6d5 17 a3 Nxc3 18 Nxe6 (White takes the opportunity to play this while he can – 18 bxc3 Nd5) 18...Nca2+ (White's very natural attacking sequence had led to victory and a brilliancy prize in an earlier game after 18...Qa5 19 Nxc3 Kd8 20 Rxd7+; Cafferty had recommended this queen sacrifice in BCM, but evidently Mr Pegoraro was not a subscriber) 19 Kb1 Bxe6 20 Rxd8+ Rxd8 21 axb4 Nxb4 22 Be2 Rf8 23 Qh5+ g6 24 Qe5 Bf5+ 25 Ka1 Rd5 26 Qb8+ Kf7 0-1. White is about to be slaughtered by 27 Qxa7 Nc2+ 28 Ka2 Nxe3 29 Qxe3 Ra5+ 30 Kb3 Rb8+ etc. You can see why that put Whites off.

13 Qb3 can be met in similar fashion with 13...c5 14 dxc6 bxc6 15 0-0-0 Qc7, although 16 e6 fxe6 17 Nxe6 Qe5 18 Rxd7 has been touted as a possibility, which remains unclear.

13...fxe6 14 dxe6 Bc6 15 Qg4

15 Nxc6 Qxd1+ 16 Rxd1 Nc2+ 17 Kd2 Nxe3 18 Kxe3 bxc6 is equal and drawish – the e-pawn is a liability as much as an asset and in view of the opposite coloured bishops can never be ferried across e7. 15 Qh5+ g6 16 Qh6 Bh4+ 17 g3 Bf6 has also been tried, but now that Black has ruled out Nf5 and established a decent home on e7 for his queen he should be comfortable.

15...Bh4+

Pretty much the only move: Black needs both to deal with the attack on his g-pawn and to prevent a devastating 0-0-0.

16 g3 Bxh1 17 0-0-0

17 Bb5+ c6 18 0-0-0 0-0 19 gxh4 is met by the cunning 19...h5! – a common theme in this line. Black cannot take on b5 as long as White can reply 20 Nf5 (threatening mate on g7) 20...Qf6 21 Bd4, but if he can deflect the queen first from g7, then he can. It also turns out that 20 Qg3 cxb5 21 Nf5 can be met by 21...Rxf5 22 Rxd8 Rxd8 with too much material for the queen, so Black survives after (for example) 20



Qg3 cxb5 21 Bg5 Qb8, forcing the queens off.

17...0-0! (Diagram 4)

The greedy 17...Bf6 runs into the crushing 18 Nf5.

18 gxh4 Qf6 19 Bb5

White has various options including a practically forced draw with 19 Bg5 Qxf1 20 Rxf1 Rxf1+ 21 Nd1 Nd3+ 22 Kc2 Ne1+, and 19 Be2, when 19...Bd5 is the recommended move for a reason we shall see in the note to White's 23rd move. The idea of the text is to control the promotion square of the e-pawn.

19...c5 20 Bg5

White continues with his plans for the e-pawn, but there was something to be said for baling out with 20 Rxh1 cxd4 21 Bxd4 Qf4+ 22 Qxf4 Rxf4 23 Bxb6 axb6 24 e7 Nc6 25 Nd5 Re4 26 Rg1 when White has enough play to win his exchange back, but little more. 20...N6d5 21 Bg5 Qxd4 22 Qxd4 cxd4 23 Nxd5 Rac8+ 24 Kb1 Nxd5 25 e7 Rfe8 with a draw may be even more accurate.

20...Qe5 21 e7 cxd4 22 exf8Q+ Rxf8 23 Rxh1

Black had a little trick here – the natural 23 Qxd4 is met by 23...Nxa2+ 24 Nxa2 Qxb5 25 Rxh1? Qc6+. Had White played 19 Be2 and play proceeded similarly then 23 Qxd4 Qxd4 24 Rxd4 would have led to a semi-ending which is really quite unpleasant for Black to defend.

23...h6! (Diagram 5)

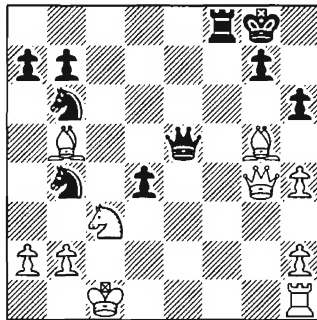


Diagram 5
Precise

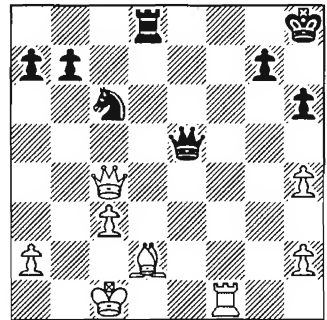


Diagram 6
Black emerges unscathed

23...dxc3 24 Qxb4 cxb2+ 25 Kb1 Nd5 leads to an attack which is good for perpetual check for one side or the other, but Black is playing to win. After the text White's g5-bishop has no good square.

24 Bd2

24 Bxh6 dxc3 25 Qxb4 cxb2+ 26 Kb1 Qf5+ 27 Kxb2 Qf6+ and Qxh6 is

the point. Black stands decidedly better then, but this was preferable to the game.

24...dxc3 25 Bc4+

Forced in view of the threat of 25...Nxa2+.

25...Nxc4 26 Qxc4+ Kh8 27 bxc3

Worse for White is 27 Bxc3 Nxa2+ 28 Qxa2? Qe3+, allowing Black to harpoon the rook on h1 next move (29 Bd2 Rc8+).

27...Nc6 28 Rf1 Rd8 (Diagram 6)

Naturally Black keeps the rooks on in view of White's unsafe king. The position has stabilized and Black has a definite advantage with his better pawns and safer king.

29 Rf2 a6

There is no hurry. White cannot plug the gaps.

30 Re2 Qd6 31 Qe6 Qc5 32 Qf7 Ne5 33 Qxb7 Nc4 34 Qb3 Nxd2 35 Rxd2 Qe3 36 Qc2 h5! 0-1

A sweet finish. None of White's pieces can move, and when his pawn moves run out it will be the end.

Statistics

Reassuring. Black has scored 46% after 12...Bd7, and 49% after the quieter 10 Be2.

Theoretical?

I am afraid so. If Black doesn't know what he is doing up to move 18 in the game there are several horrible pitfalls, and even after that at least having seen the tactics before is handy when it comes to trying to work them out.

Theoretical Status

Excellent. No doubt there is more to be discovered, but this variation has been heavily investigated for thirty years and if there is one reply to the Four Pawns Attack which is not going to be refuted, this is it.

Game 31

□ R.Byrne ■ Albur

Berkeley 1984

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 Nc6 7 Be3 Bf5 8 Nc3 e6 9 Nf3 Bg4

This is certainly Black's first reserve to 9...Be7 but, as I said before, Black has a number of other moves here. Perhaps the longest established is 9...Qd7. Black prepares either ...0-0-0 or ...Rd8 with pressure on the d-pawn, and also readies himself for 10 d5 by defending the bishop on f5. White can still play 10 d5. Black continues 10...exd5 11 cxd5 Nb4 12 Nd4 and now he has two possibilities. 12...N6xd5 13

Nxd5 (13 Nxf5? Qxf5 14 Nxd5 0-0-0 or the immediate 13...0-0-0 are very dangerous for White, if not lost) 13...Nxd5 14 Nxf5 0-0-0 15 Qd3 g6 produces fearsome and untried complications, as does the once-condemned 12...Bg6!?. In the marvellous recent biography Benko points out that the 'refutation' 13 Bb5 c6 14 dxc6 bxc6 15 Nxc6(!) Nxc6 16 Qf3 Rc8 17 Rc1 actually loses to 17...Nc4! 18 Bf4 Bd3!! etc.

White's (much commoner) alternative is 10 Be2. 10...0-0-0 here is presently not looking good (for those with databases, the games Minasian-Donchenko, 1988 and Kotronias-Short, Gibraltar 2003, in which for reasons only he could explain Short repeated a line long known to be bad for Black up to the hideous 16...Na8, will show why), so Black is wiser to try 10...Rd8 11 0-0 (if White prepares to defend the d-pawn with 11 Qd2 then 11...Na5 is annoying, hitting the c-pawn and preparing moves like ...Bb4, ...Bg4 and perhaps ...c7-c5 or ...f7-f6, putting great pressure on White's centre). After 11 0-0 Bg4 the White d-pawn is en prise. White has the choice between the sensible 12 c5 Nd5 13 Nxd5 Qxd5 14 Ng5 Bxe2 15 Qxe2 Rd7 16 Qd2 Nd8, when Black is cramped but solid and can aim for ...f7-f6, and the wild 12 Ng5 Bxe2 13 Qxe2 (or 13 Nxe2) 13...Nxd4 14 Bxd4 Qxd4+ 15 Kh1, which produces another virtually uncharted thicket of complications.

Another possibility is the developing 9...Bb4, which prevents 10 d5 radically and aims for counterplay via either ...f7-f6 or ...Bxc3 and...Na5. White's most sensible reply is 10 Be2 0-0 11 Rc1, meeting 11...Na5 with 12 Bg5 Qd7 13 c5 Na4 14 Qd2 and so on. White can castle on the kingside and has dangerous attacking chances there with Black's minor pieces stuck on the queenside. Black has yet to demonstrate a decent counter to this plan.

Finally, 9...Nb4 10 Rc1 c5 was Alekhine's idea to demolish White's centre, but after the simple 11 Be2 Black has difficulties, for example 11...cxd4 12 Nxd4 Bg6 13 c5! and Qa4+ (13...Bxc5 14 Bb5+ Nd7 15 Nxe6 is dire), or 11...Be7 12 0-0 0-0 13 dxc5 Nd7 14 b4.

The text has a dual purpose, preventing 10 d5 in view of 10...Bxf3 and ...Nxe5 and preparing an assault on the d-pawn with ...Bxf3.

10 Be2

The main reply. 10 Qd2 is also possible but Black obtains good play with 10...Bb4 11 a3 Be7! (the idea of this is to weaken b3 and make ...Na5 more effective). This has proved very effective for Black. Huebner-Hort, 1987 and Fedorov-Baburin, 2000 are the main games that show why – in a nutshell, Black will play ...Qd7 and ...0-0-0. If White also castles queenside, then he has troubles with the laser bishop on f5 and the constant possibility of ...Na5-b3 mate, and if, on the other hand, he goes for it with b2-b4 then Black can play ...Bxf3 and ...f7-f6 and again White's king finds no rest.

10...Bxf3

The only popular move, preparing the following idea.

11 gxf3

11 Bxf3 Nxc4.

11...Qh4+ 12 Bf2 Qf4 (Diagram 7)

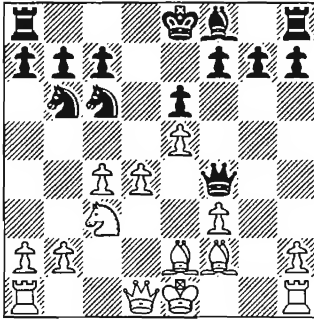


Diagram 7

A classic 'Four Pawns Attack' position

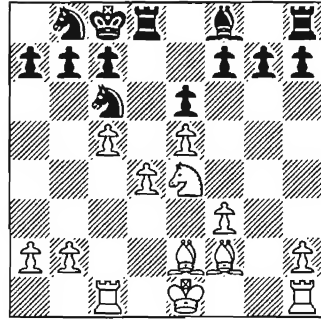


Diagram 8

An impressive retreat

A modern-looking manoeuvre first essayed in Lasker-Tarrasch, 1923 (although Black had an extra tempo there).

13 c5

13 Qc1 Qxc1+ 14 Rxc1 is less pressing, since Black has the time to play 14...0-0-0 and recapture on d5 with the rook after 15 c5 Nd5.

13...Nd7

13...Nd5 is also possible. The *dernier cri* of theory in this line is 13 c5 Nd5 14 Nxd5 exd5 15 Qd2 Qxd2+ 16 Kxd2 g6 17 f4 (it is not necessarily correct to play this at once – ECO likes 17 Be3) 17...Bh6 18 Be3 Ne7 19 Bd3 Nf5 20 Bxf5 gxf5 21 Rhg1 Kd7 22 Rg3 Rg8 23 b4 Rxb3, Atalik-de Firmian, 2002 (improving on an earlier game in 2001 between Timman and De Firmian where 23...Rg6 was played and Black was squashed). Now Black can construct an impenetrable fortress with ...h7-h5 and so on. Both sides' play here was very thematic – Black's manoeuvre of the knight to f5 especially – but nonetheless I feel this is a slightly depressing, if solid, way for Black to play. Once he has to capture on d5 with a pawn he loses a lot of his possibilities; he can hardly expect to win these positions and White, no doubt, has other move orders which will require equally accurate defence.

14 Qc1

14 Bb5 is actually a bit awkward, threatening to double the c-pawns before Black can get in ...0-0-0 and ...Ndb8 as in the main game, for example 14...Be7 15 0-0 Bh4 16 Bxc6 bxc6 17 Qa4 0-0 18 Rad1 Rab8 19 Qxc6. Black hasn't demonstrated a good antidote to this plan at the moment. Albur's proposal of 14...f6 has not been tried but, like Davies, I don't fancy it much. If I were Black in this position I think I would be inclined to try 14...Ne7. This takes the knight towards

where it wants to go; Black intends ...0-0-0, so to make sense of his 14 Bb5 White has to go 15 Bxd7+ Kxd7 but I'm not sure that he can exploit the resulting dislocation of Black's king, hampered as he is by the need to keep f3 covered. Meanwhile the exchange of White's king's bishop for a knight is a definite achievement for Black, and if White cannot act quickly Black is ready with ...Rd8 and ...Kc8. What White can do is force the exchange of queens in a way which improves his pawn structure with 16 Qd3 Rd8 17 Qe4 Qxe4 18 fxe4, but I think Black's still fine as he can continue with ...Kc8 and ...Nc6 to hold back d4-d5 by the pressure on e5, and then ...b7-b6 or ...f7-f6 to break up the centre.

The text is not presently regarded as theoretically crucial, but I have chosen this game as it illustrates well Black's typical plans in these endings, as well as being a fine game by one of the great upholders of Alekhine's Defence.

14...Qxc1+ 15 Rxc1 0-0-0 16 Ne4 Ndb8! (Diagram 8)

Excellent. Black's knight had no future on d7. Regrouping this knight to c6 and the present c6-knight either to f5 via e7 or to d5 via either b4 or e7 is a typical procedure for Black in this line, often combined with ...g7-g6 and ...Bh6. The thematic alternative is an early break with ...f7-f6 and ...g7-g5 but here White's knight manoeuvre has discouraged that idea for the moment.

17 Ng5 Rd7 18 Bb5 h6 19 Ne4 g6 20 0-0 Bg7

In spite of his lack of space and the two bishops Black already stands well. White's weakened pawn structure affords both knights superb outposts on d5 and f5, while the d-pawn is constantly weak and the e3-bishop has few prospects.

21 f4 h5

Now that the f-pawn is on f4 Black wants h6 for his bishop.

22 Rc4 Bh6 23 Be3 a6 24 Ba4 Rdd8 (Diagram 9)

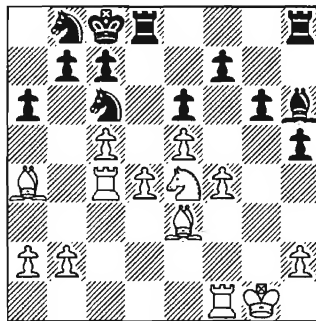


Diagram 9
Another constructive retreat

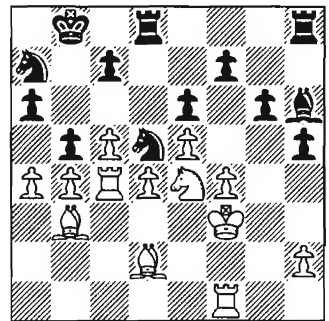


Diagram 10
Wrong plan?

Little by little Black untangles himself. He needs to unpin the c6-knight in order to move it and free c6 for his other knight. Meanwhile, although his position may look imposing, White can only wait.

25 b4 Na7

26 b5 requires prevention.

26 Bb3 Nbc6 27 a4 Kb8 28 Kg2 Ne7

This is typically thematic in this pawn structure.

29 Kf3 Nd5 30 Bd2 b5?! (Diagram 10)

Alburt sees a tactical opportunity but I wonder if he should have continued manoeuvring instead.

31 cxb6

White cannot allow the blockade of the queenside. Black could send his other knight to f5 and consider how to improve further after that.

31...Nxb6 32 Rc2 Rxd4 33 Nc5

White wins his pawn back, and Alburt may have underestimated the play White now gets – see move 35.

33...Ka8 34 Ke3

Of course 34 Nxa6? loses to 34...Rd3+, winning the bishop on b3.

34...Rhd8 35 a5?

Computers say that 35 Bc3 was good for White – he drives the rooks off the d-file before going Nxa6, for example 35...Rd1 36 Rxd1 Rxd1 37 Nxa6 and I haven't been able to discover any reason why this isn't true.

35...Nb5!

Now Black is winning.

36 axb6 cxb6

The threat of ...Rd3+ recovers the piece.

37 Nxe6

37 Bxe6 bxc5 38 Bxf7 g5 is no better.

37...fxe6 38 Bxe6 g5! 39 Be1

The threat was 39...gxf4+ 40 Ke2 f3+ winning a piece, and White had no good defence.

39...gxf4+ 40 Kf3 Rd3+ 41 Kg2 f3+

Alburt finishes ruthlessly. The pawn cannot be taken because of 42...Rxf3 43 Kxf3 Nd4+ etc.

42 Kg3 Bg7 43 Kh4 Bxe5 44 Kxh5 Ka7 45 Bc4 R3d7 46 Bxb5 Rg7 47 Bd2 Rh8+ 48 Bh6 Bf4 49 Rc6 Rg5+ 50 Kh4 0-1

White didn't wait for 50...Rxb5.

Statistics

Encouraging indeed. Black has scored 51% with 9...Bg4, and still 49%

even after 10 Be2. 9...Qd7 has also managed 51%, despite a slightly dubious reputation.

Theoretical?

Not terribly. With 9...Bg4 Black needs to be comfortable with a space disadvantage and better structure, but there's not that much theory to know. 9...Qd7 is extremely complicated, but theory has only scratched the surface.

Theoretical status

9...Bg4 is slightly controversial. 13 c5 Nd7 14 Bb5 is a threat, but 13 c5 Nd5 must be a bit better for White in my opinion, despite de Firmian's eventual success in drawing the resulting endgame.

The 9...Qd7 system is only looking a good bet with 10...Rd8 at the moment. 9...Bb4 and 9...Nb4 – particularly the latter – are under a dark cloud and look like staying there.

One small point to consider before making 9...Bg4 your main defence to the Four Pawns Attack: White can rule it out altogether with 9 Be2! Thus Black's most sensible procedure is to play 9...Be7 10 Nf3 0-0 11 0-0 f6, transposing to the quiet system explained in the note to White's tenth move in Game 30, which is fine for Black.

Game 32

□ Majstorovic ■ Bryson

Correspondence 1985

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 f4 Bf5 (Diagram 11)

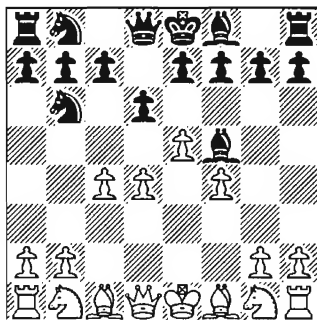


Diagram 11

Black refrains from ...dxe5

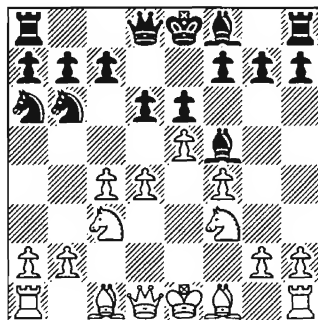


Diagram 12

Black changes course

The system Black employs in this game has perhaps the best reputation of any against the Four Pawns Attack. One question is whether it is actually possible to employ it at all, given a modicum of move-order

cunning by White, and I have tweaked the move order of this game a bit to make my point. The key move to bear in mind is Bd3 for White. If White can get away with this without some inconvenience resulting (basically, either losing the e-pawn to Nxe5 with the d-pawn pinned against the queen on d3, or allowing an effective ...c7-c5), then he also gets control of the important e4-square. A knight there can be devastating. Black has to arrange things in such a way that this move does not work, and this is why his most traditional move order is 5...dxe5 6 fxe5 Nc6, so as to attack d4 and force 7 Be3. Note that Be3 does not contribute to making Bd3 playable since it does not defend the e-pawn. In the traditional order Black then plays 7...Bf5, threatening 8...Nb4 and so forcing 8 Nc3. Then 8...e6 9 Bd3 still loses the e-pawn, so White plays 9 Nf3 and we have the main line position of Games 30 and 31.

However, 6...Nc6 blocks the c-pawn, and Black would like to be able to use that to attack White's centre, so in the present system he delays ...Nc6 and instead walks a tactical tightrope to stop Bd3. For the moment the text is fine, the cunning plan being seen in the continuation 6 Bd3 Bxd3 7 Qxd3 dxe5 8 fxe5 c5 9 d5? e6 10 d6/Nc3 Qh4+ winning the c4-pawn.

6 Nc3 e6 7 Be3

This is the crucial moment. 7 Bd3 is still no good (7...Bxd3 8 Qxd3 c5 9 d5? dxe5 10 fxe5 Qh4+) but with 7 Nf3 White can prevent Black's idea. The point is that after 7 Nf3 dxe5 8 fxe5 Bb4 (8...Be7 9 Bd3 is likewise strong for the same reasons) 9 Bd3 Bxd3 10 Qxd3 c5 11 0-0 cxd4 White is in time for 12 Ne4!, without needing for the moment to recapture on d4 (clearly if White had wasted time on Be3 he would not yet have been able to castle and the c3-knight would still be pinned at this juncture). After 12 Ne4 White has very dangerous attacking chances indeed with his threat of c4-c5 and Nd6+, and the ever-present danger of Nf6+ if Black castles short (when this position arises Black is generally mated before move 25).

Black's independent option after 7 Nf3 (with 7...dxe5 8 fxe5 Nc6 he can return to the main lines, since White has no better than 9 Be3; Black is by now ready to answer 9 Bd3 with 9...Bg4!) is 7...Na6 (**Diagram 12**).

Black's idea with this move is to challenge the centre with ...c7-c5 which, if played at once, would fail to 8 dxc5 dxc5 9 Qxd8+ with a dire ending for Black. His ideas are well seen after 8 Be3 c5, for example 9 d5? Nb4 10 Rc1 dxe5 11 Nxe5 f6 chasing the knight away and winning the d5-pawn, or 9 Be2 Be7 10 0-0 0-0 11 Qd2 cxd4, while 8 Bd3 Bxd3 9 Qxd3 c5 is already at least equal for Black. White has two sensible ways to play. One is 8 Be3 c5 9 dxc5 dxc5 (9...Nxc5 is more combative and virtually untested) 10 a3 (directed against the a6-knight) 10...Qxd1+ 11 Rxd1 Be7 12 Be2 with a tedious but defensible position for Black. The other, however, is the real problem with this line in my view, and that is (7...Na6) 8 exd6!. Both Burgess and Da-

vies suggest 8...Nb4 now – Davies quite enthusiastically – but so far as I can see this does not offer sufficient compensation after 9 dxc7 Qxc7 (9...Qc8 10 c5 and 11 Bb5 is much worse) 10 Nb5 Qd8 11 Na3. Consequently I think Black is forced to continue 8...cxd6 9 Be2 Be7 10 Be3 0-0 11 Rc1! (and not 11 0-0 when Black can obtain some freedom with 11...Rc8 12 b3 Nd5!). This produces a curious Exchange-type setup where on the one hand White has played the rather uncalled-for f2-f4 and on the other Black has developed his knight to the horrid a6-square. I suspect this favours White as the f4-pawn is not useless in that it restrains ...e6-e5, whereas the knight on a6 is just terrible and will take a couple of tempi to find somewhere sensible, time that White can use to further his queenside pawn push.

Thus we can conclude that Black's move order is only a trick – if White plays 7 Nf3 Black has no good independent choice. It is quite a useful trick to know for all that, certainly for White, because the system in this game is worth avoiding, if only to restrict Black's options.

7...dxe5 8 fxe5 Bb4 9 Nf3

9 a3? Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 Qh4+ is good for Black. 9 Qb3 can be met with 9...a5 10 a3 a4! 11 Qxb4 (11 Qd1? Bxc3+ as after 9 a3) 11...Nc6 12 Qc5 when, pace Burgess, 12...Nd7? does not trap the queen and 13 Qb5 wins – instead 12...Ra5 13 Nb5 Nd7 14 Nxc7+ Qxc7 15 Qd6 Qb6 results in an untested position which looks reasonable for Black.

9...c5 (Diagram 13)

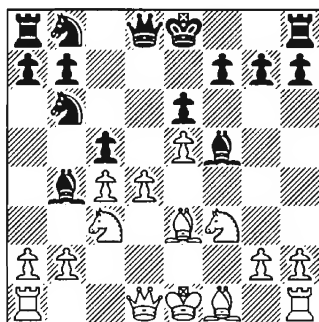


Diagram 13

An attempt to justify the move order

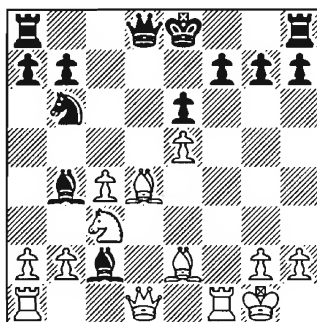


Diagram 14

An interesting tactic

This is the point of Black's play.

10 Be2

White does best just to develop; neither 10 a3 cxd4 11 Qxd4 Qxd4 12 Bxd4 Bxc3+ 13 Bxc3 Na4 14 Bb4!? Nxb2 15 Nd4 a5 nor 10 Qb3 cxd4 11 Nxd4 Qh4+ 12 g3 Qe4 13 Kf2 Bxc3 14 Bg2 Qxd4 (a very strong queen sacrifice) is desirable.

10...Nc6 11 0-0 cxd4

It isn't clear either that 12 d5 was a threat (both 12...Bxc3 and 12...Na5 are conceivable in reply) or that 12 dxc5 is a good idea, and if not it must be better for Black to keep the tension, so 11...0-0 might be better. It hasn't been played more than a couple of times, so I have no theory to give to you, but 12 dxc5 Nd7 13 Na4 Nxe5 14 Nxe5 Nxe5 15 Qb3 Bg4! is an idea worth knowing.

12 Nxd4 Nxd4 13 Bxd4 Bc2 (Diagram 14)

A slightly strange-looking move whose purpose is to force the queen to d2 and thus avoid 13...0-0 14 Nb5! etc.

14 Qd2 Rc8 15 Kh1

15 Rf4 is also dangerous, just going for it on the kingside.

15...0-0

15...Nxc4? drops a piece to 16 Qxc2 Qxd4 17 Qa4+.

16 b3 Bc5 17 Nb5 Bxd4 18 Nxd4 Bg6

It is high time to get this piece 'off prise' before an accident happens, for example 18...a6 19 Bf3 Rc7 20 Qe3 and Nxe6 after the bishop moves.

19 Bf3 Rc7 20 Qe3 Rd7 21 Rad1 a6 (Diagram 15)

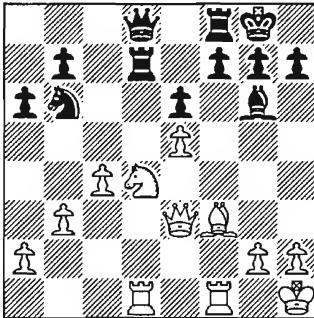


Diagram 15
How might White continue?

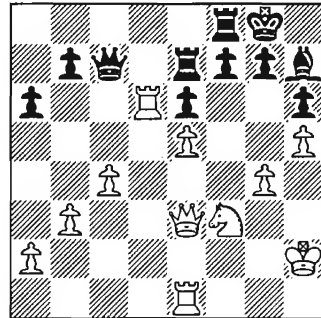


Diagram 16
White is in the driving seat

22 Rd2

Up to here the game had followed an earlier contest between Craig Pritchett and Howard Williams – the spiritual father of the 8...Bb4 variation – which was considered to demonstrate equality for Black and in which White had continued 22 Be4. I don't understand that move at all – in fact I would say that it was a positional error. What White would like in this position is to use his space advantage to dominate the d-file, if possible, and to press for mate on the dark squares on the kingside if the opportunity arises. If he has to ex-

change any minor pieces at all, then the best trade for White would be his bishop for Black's knight, which can defend the dark squares. 22 Be4 promotes none of those aims. This pawn structure is deceptive. It looks very nice for Black, but the extra space it gives White in the middlegame, and his possibilities of a kingside attack, should not be underestimated. In fact Black often needs to break with ...f7-f6/f5 if he can.

22...Qc7 23 h4 h6 24 h5 Bh7 25 Bg4

The teasing threat of 26 Bxe6 fxe6 27 Rxf8+ and Nxe6+ hampers Black in contesting the d-file. It seems to me that White has all the chances here, and that Black ought to look into 11...0-0.

25...Re7 26 Rfd1 Nd7 27 Re1

White hasn't really lost time – the knight is wandering around like a lost soul and on d7 prevents the rooks from challenging the d-file. In fact in Pritchett-Williams the knight went to c8, and I wonder if that wasn't best here, too.

27...Nc5 28 Nf3 Ne4 29 Rd4 Ng3+ 30 Kh2 Nf5 31 Bxf5 Bxf5

This exchange brings Black no relief. The knight was not on a good circuit, but at least it was capable of defending the dark squares.

32 g4 Bh7 33 Rd6 (Diagram 16)

White dominates the board. This rook cannot be challenged without an enormous passed pawn arriving on d6 in its place.

33...Qa5 34 Re2 Qa3 35 Rd2 Qc1

This queen tour is a graphic illustration of Black's suffering.

36 g5 Qb1

36...hxg5 37 Qxg5 Ree8 38 h6 Bg6 39 hxg7 Kxg7 40 Qf6+ Kg8 41 R6d4 followed by Rh4 is no better. Black's helplessness is striking.

37 gxh6 Qf5 38 hxg7+ Qxh5+ 39 Kg1 Rc8 40 R6d4 f5 41 exf6 1-0

A very instructive game in which Black's mistakes are by no means easy to pinpoint.

Statistics

Black has scored 51% after 8...Bb4.

Theoretical?

Not terribly. Black is going to survive the opening as long as he knows up to 9...c5. If you do want to play this variation, though, careful attention to the early move order is essential. If Black allows Bd3 to happen in one of the 'bad' positions for him, he rates to get mauled.

Theoretical Status

Has a high reputation, but I don't like the game line at all. I would look into 11...0-0 if I wanted to play this line, and in any case if this is

to be a stand-alone system 7 Nf3 Na6 8 exd6 also needs to be made to work. I don't see this happening.

Game 33

□ S.Movsessian ■ Luther

Istanbul 2003

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 f4 dxe5 6 fxe5 c5 (Diagram 17)

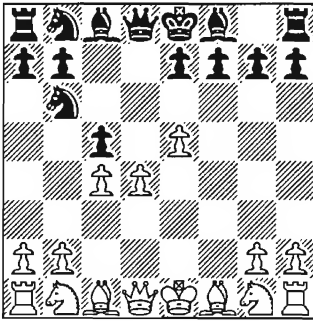


Diagram 17
Ultra-provocative play

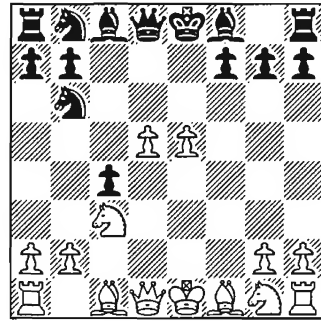


Diagram 18
Onward!

A move with a curious history and wild by-ways. First investigated in the 1920s, for Eales and Williams in 1973 it had 'no redeeming features' yet today it is quite a respectable alternative to the main lines, although there remain many complicated and unsolved questions.

7 d5

The apparently feeble 7 Nf3 cxd4 8 Qxd4 Qxd4 9 Nxd4 actually has an idea behind it – the unwary 9...Nc6 is met by 10 Nb5, which causes difficulties. I am not convinced by the usual recommendation of 9...e6 10 Nb5 Na6 11 Be3 Bb4+ 12 Nd2 0-0 either: it seems to me that White is better after 13 a3 (and not 13 Nxa7? which merely develops Black's pieces). I think Black ought to look into the untested 7...Bg4 8 d5 N8d7. 7 dxc5?!, on the other hand, is good for Black: 7...Qxd1+ 8 Kxd1 Na4 9 b4 a5 10 a3? axb4 11 axb4 Nc3+! etc. Of course White doesn't have to fall for this, but if he can't maintain his queenside pawn wedge he's simply worse.

7...e6

The original idea and still the main line, but 7...g6 is an alternative system. It has never caught on at a high level and is not well explored, so I haven't given too much detail, although it is worth noting that Black has scored 57%. Black intends simply to develop with ...Bg7, ...0-0 and ...Bg4 to target the e5-pawn. Normally he plays ...e7-e6 also, and White has to be very careful about d5-d6 in reply, which

can lead his centre into an elephant trap, one game, for example, continuing 8 Bf4 Bg7 9 Nc3 0-0 10 Bd3?! (an ineffective square) 10...e6 11 d6 Nc6 12 Nf3 Nd7 13 Qe2 Nd4 14 Nxd4 cxd4 15 Nb5 Qa5+ 16 Bd2 Qb6 17 b4 Nxe5. The other thing for White to avoid is accidentally losing the e5-pawn to some combination of ...Bxf3 and ...N8d7, for example (instead of 10 Bd3, above) 10 Be2 e6 11 Nf3 exd5 12 cxd5 Bg4 13 0-0 N8d7 14 Qe1 Bxf3 15 Bxf3 Nxe5! 16 Bxe5 Re8 was another game. The main line is considered to be 8 Bf4 Bg7 9 Nc3 0-0 10 Qd2 e6 11 0-0-0 exd5 12 cxd5 Bg4 13 Re1 c4 14 h3 Bf5, planning a pawn sacrifice with ...Bd3. The spectacular games Volzhin-L.Sveshnikov, 1988 (annotated on Chessbase and in Davies) and Ilincic-Marinkovic, 1989 (annotated in Burgess) were what launched this variation into the limited popularity it has enjoyed since.

Perhaps White should reflect that if he can maintain the pawns at e5 and d5 he is bound to stand well, and to do that what he needs is his knights undisturbed on c3 and f3 and his bishop on f4. He does not particularly need his king's bishop, and what he certainly doesn't need is to castle queenside into the line of Black's fianchettoed bishop and in front of Black's knights, thus presenting Black with counterplay. So I liked White's play in Novak-Havas, Pula 2000, which went 8 Bf4 Bg7 9 h3 0-0 10 Nf3 e6 11 Nc3 exd5 (this might be premature in view of White's 13th) 12 cxd5 N8d7 13 Bb5. Black is already in difficulty here, and the game went 13...a6 14 Bxd7 (of course) 14...Nxd7 15 0-0 c4 16 Qe2 Nb6 17 Bg5 f6 18 exf6 Bxf6 19 Bxf6 Rxf6 20 Nd4 and White won handily. If I was going to play this system this is what would trouble me.

8 Nc3

8 d6 loses to 8...Qh4+ 9 g3 Qe4+, but I am afraid a long variation (which dates from the 1920's!) is needed to prove it since White can in fact trap the queen: 10 Qe2 Qxh1 11 Nf3 Nc6 12 Nbd2 Nd7 13 Kf2 Ndx5 14 Nxe5 Qxh2+ 15 Bg2 Nd4 16 Qd1 Bxd6 17 Nf1 (at last!) 17...Qxg2+ 18 Kxg2 Bxe5.

8...exd5 9 cxd5 c4! (Diagram 18)

This is the key move of the line. The pawn is not en prise because of 10 Bxc4?? Qh4+ (and not 10...Nxc4?? 11 Qa4+). Nonetheless the move does amount to a pawn sacrifice, the idea being that Black wants to develop his king's bishop actively and is prepared to give up both a tempo and a pawn to do it.

10 d6

This move leads to razor-sharp complications. The 'main line' is 10 Nf3. Now the older 10...Bg4 was played in the wonderful game Bronstein-Ljubojevic, Petropolis Interzonal 1973, which has been annotated in many places, notably by Speelman in *Best Chess Games 1970-1980* and Timman in *Art of Chess Analysis* (both long out of print but must-buys if you can find them). The verdict is that White stands well in some awesome complications starting with 11 Qd4

Bxf3 12 gxf3 Bb4 13 Bxc4 0-0 14 Rg1, but since these are well covered elsewhere and in any case the quiet 11 Be2 also seems to be good I haven't given the details.

The modern line is 10...Bb4 and the pawn sacrifice I referred to is 11 Bxc4 Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 Nxc4 13 Qa4+ Nd7 14 Qxc4 Nb6 15 Qb5+ Qd7 16 Qxd7+ Kxd7 17 d6 Rc8. Black has good compensation for the pawn in this endgame, which is well analysed in other books. 11 Bg5 Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 Qxd5 13 Qxd5 Nxd5 14 0-0-0 Ne7 15 Bxe7 Kxe7 16 Bxc4 Bg4 17 Rhf1 Nc6 is also nothing to write home about for White.

10 a3?! Bc5 prevents kingside castling and is fine for Black; lovers of one-movers should immediately get out their databases and look up Black's twentieth move in Vetemaa-Shabalov, USSR 1986. White's other purposeful move is 10 Be3 Bb4 11 Bxb6, which allows him to maintain the d5-pawn, but Black can develop all his pieces with 11...Qxb6 followed by ...0-0, ...Bg4, ...Nd7 and so on and should have no problems. Other moves tend to allow Black's counterplay to remove the centre, for example 10 Qd4 Nc6! 11 Qe4 Nb4, threatening both the d-pawn and the embarrassing ...g7-g6, or 10 Bf4 Bb4 11 Bxc4 Nxc4 12 Qa4+ Nc6 13 dxc6 Nxb2 and Black wins.

The text move is by far White's sharpest and indeed his only critical test of Black's line. He hems in the bishop at the cost of releasing c6 for the knight, and introduces the idea of Nb5-c7. The traditional reply is 10...Nc6 11 Nf3 (11 Bf4 g5 12 Ne4 gxf4 is a similar queen sacrifice) 11...Bg4 12 Bf4 g5 13 Ne4 gxf4 14 Nf6+ Qxf6 15 exf6 0-0-0. This was thought good for Black for a while until Burgess' 1996 book raised doubts after 16 Qc1. That occurred in the entertaining game Bryson-Luther, Bled Olympiad 2002. Black had drawn on that occasion but computers will tell you that White was winning. I imagine both Movsessian and Luther knew this and if the interested reader cares to feed Bryson-Luther to a computer it will confirm how. Given that 10...Nc6 11 Nb5 Qh4+ 12 g3 Qe4 13 Kf2 Qxh1 14 Bg5 is also extremely dangerous for Black (Bender-Rogulj, 2002 went 14...f6 15 Nc7+ Kf7 16 e6+ Kg6 17 Be3 when 17...f5 is unclear according to a combination of Fritz, Burgess and Flear, although I can't see Black's position catching on), I think the future lies in Black neither tossing material nor committing his king to g6 just yet.

10...Be6!?

Variably suggested but untested before this game. Black's idea is to meet 11 Nb5 with 11...Nd5 (the ...Qh4+ trick is still defending the c-pawn) and now 12 Nf3 Qa5+ (and not Martin's 12...Na6 which basically loses to 13 Bxc4 Ne3? 14 Qa4). Black does have some other ideas. In his notes on chesspublishing.com Andrew Martin suggests 10...g6 11 Nf3 Bg7 but now 12 Bg5 f6 13 exf6 Bxf6 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Bxc4 Nxc4 16 Qa4+, which is supposed to be good for White (it certainly looks it), is considered the refutation, and he doesn't mention this.

11 Nf3 Nc6 12 Nb5

Martin gave 12 Be2 g6 as satisfactory for Black, but he doesn't say what he's going to do after 13 Bg5, and to be frank I don't have any idea myself: 13...Qd7 14 Bf6 Rg8 15 Ng5 looks extremely strong, and 13...Qc8 14 Nb5 even worse. I think Luther's intention against both 12 Bf4 and 12 Be2 was more likely 12...Nd7, creating a decent post for the queen on a5 and exerting pressure on e5. In due course Black can break up the e5/d6 pawn duo with ...f7-f6.



TIP: Once White gets this e5/d6 structure in the Four Pawns Attack Black almost always needs (i) to play ...Nd7, ...Nc6 to attack e5, (ii) to keep the possibility of ...f7-f6 and (iii) to watch out for Bg5!

12...Rc8 13 Bg5

The bishop isn't so great here, but I think Movsessian wanted to stop the above-mentioned plan before the knight can move to d7 and open the path to a5 for the queen. 13 Nxc7+ Rxc7 14 dxc7 Qxc7 is good for Black – he has ended up tossing material after all but at least it wasn't a queen, and his active pieces and White's lagging development and unsafe king (the bishop will come to c5) give Black the advantage.

13...Qd7 14 a4 (Diagram 19)

Threatening to win the c4-pawn after a5.

14...h6 15 Be3 Nd5 16 Bf2 a6 17 Nbd4

17 Bxc4 axb5 18 Bxd5 is met not by the tempting 18...Bxd5 19 Qxd5 Nb4, since White has good compensation for the exchange after 20 Qxb5 Nc2+ 21 Ke2 Nxa1 22 Rxa1 Qxb5+ 23 axb5 f6 24 Rd1 Kd7, but 18...Nxe5! 19 Nxe5 Qxd6, recovering the piece with a good game. As Martin says, after 17 Nbd4 a critical position has been reached. Black needs to act before the c-pawn simply drops.

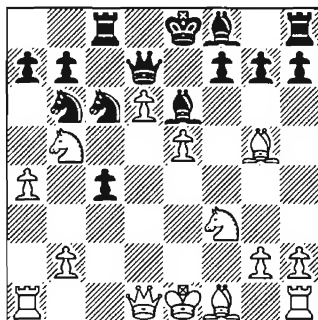


Diagram 19
White's aggression continues

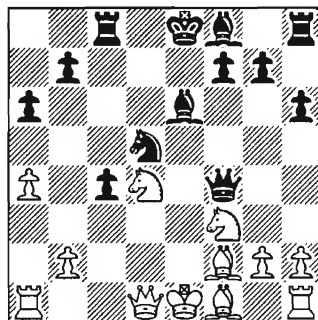


Diagram 20
Drastic action

17...Nxe5!?

It's not clear – well it's not clear to me, at least – that this was actually necessary. Black could have continued 17...Nxd4 18 Qxd4 Nb4 19 Qd2 Nc6, when the c-pawn is defended and Black can go on with ...g7-g5, ...Bg7 and ...0-0. At least all his pieces are playing and he's not material down. But the text is a reasonable gamble over the board.

18 Nxe5 Qxd6 19 Nef3 Qf4 (Diagram 20)

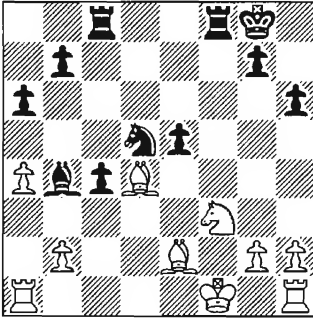
Black has two pawns for the piece, with active forces, and the threat of ...Bb4+ is going to force White's king to move. On the other hand White is in no danger of getting mated quickly, the pawns themselves are no great threat, and White has no weaknesses. The position is unclear – perhaps you'd want to be Black over the board and White in correspondence, as is so often the case with these speculative sacrifices.

20 Be2 Bb4+ 21 Kf1 0-0 22 Nxe6

The crucial position for assessing the sacrifice. Martin suggests 22 Qc1 Qf6 23 Nc2 Bd6 24 Bd4, planning 25 Kf2, but Black is still pretty active – even computers give him equality and over the board he must have good chances. But the text does seem to be good if followed up correctly.

22...fxe6 23 Qd4 Qxd4 24 Bxd4

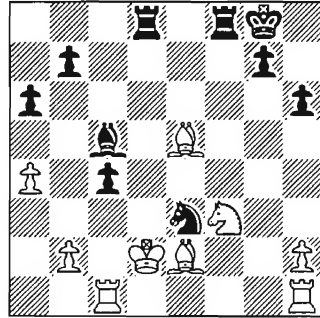
Black looks to be in trouble, but he has a shot.

24...e5! (Diagram 21)**Diagram 21**

A necessary sacrifice

25 Bxe5 Ne3+ 26 Kg1 Nc2 27 Rc1

Fritz prefers 27 Rd1 with the idea that 27...Bc5+ 28 Kf1 Ne3+ 29 Ke1 Nxd1 30 Bxc4+ Kh8 31 Kxd1 is good for White. I must admit I can't see why Movsessian rejected this – possibly he didn't see the game continuation and thought he was just winning in the game, or maybe time trouble was already a factor.

27...Bc5+ 28 Kf1 Ne3+ 29 Ke1 Nxc2+ 30 Kd1 Ne3+ 31 Kd2 Rcd8+**Diagram 22**

Black maintains the pressure

(Diagram 22) 32 Kc3?

The only move according to Martin, although to me it seems to be a losing blunder. 32 Ke1 may be met by 32...Ng2+ 33 Kf1 Nh4, although whether Black has a decisive continuation after 34 Rc3 isn't clear. In fact since rushing in with 34...Rd3 35 Bxd3 Rxf3+ 36 Ke2 cxd3+ 37 Rxd3 certainly isn't the answer, and meanwhile White threatens just to take the c-pawn with check and continue with Be2, Bg3 and so on, I'm not sure how Black continues.

32...Rxf3!

Ouch. Movsessian cannot have seen this move. He reacts well now; the players must have been in desperate time trouble. Of course 33 Bxf3 Rd3 is mate.

33 b4!?

A fine swindling attempt, but Black is still winning.

33...Nd5+ 34 Kb2 Rb3+ 35 Ka1 Ra3+ 36 Kb2 Rb3+ 37 Ka1 Ra3+ 38 Kb2 ½-½

A very hard decision to understand on Black's part; the obvious 35/37...Rxb4 would have left him with a winning position, three pawns up, and he has a large number of other winning moves too.

Statistics

Black has scored a respectable 47%.

Theoretical?

Yes and no. To be honest, the statistics don't count for much, since in so many of the 400 or so games it has been clear that one side or the other has no idea what they are doing and has simply lost without a fight. On the other hand there isn't much theory after 10 d6 Be6. Black could get by with knowing that move and the sequence leading to the ending after 10 Nf3 Bb4, and working the rest out.

Theoretical Status

Now you're asking! 10 d6 is the only critical move. In the end I don't think the queen sacrifices are going to prove viable, fun though they are. I predict that theory will develop with 10...Be6, and given that there's only one game, there isn't really any 'theoretical status' to tell you about. All we can say is that Black's idea made a successful debut.

Game 34

Kranzl Baumgardt

ICCF e-mail 2000

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 c4 Nb6 5 f4 g5!? (Diagram 23)

You have to love this move. As Kasparov said, chess is an interesting game if such moves are possible. Whether it's any good is another

matter, but before we get on to that, I promised you a quick look at 5...g6 and Wohl's 5...c5 gambit.

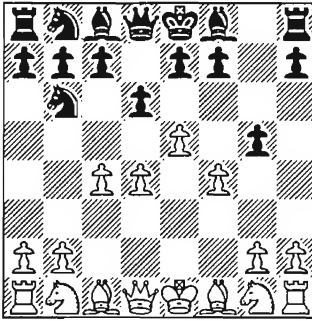


Diagram 23
Hmmm...

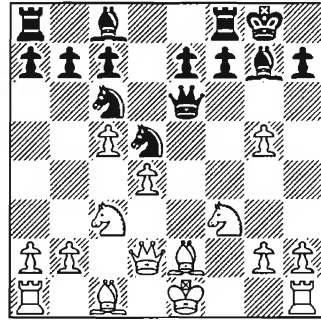


Diagram 24
Black is struggling

The idea of 5...c5 is to meet 6 dxc5 (the only sensible move as 6 d5 e6 is fine for Black) not with 6...dxc5 7 Qxd8+, which is not much fun, but 6...N6d7 7 cxd6 exd6 8 exd6 Nf6. If White continues mundanely now with 9 Nf3 Bxd6 10 Be2 0-0 then Black is certainly going to obtain very adequate compensation with a continuation like 11 0-0 Bc5+ 12 Kh1 Qxd1 13 Bxd1 Ne4, but instead of such feebleness White has a number of dangerous ideas. One is 9 c5!? with the idea 9...Qa5+ 10 Nc3 Qxc5 11 Qe2+ Be6 12 Nb5 Na6 13 a3, maintaining the d6-pawn and planning Be3 and Rd1, when Black will struggle to stay afloat.

However, the plan which has caught White's eye in encounters in this variation so far is 9 Qe2+ Be6 10 Nc3 (not 10 f5? Qa5+ but now this is a threat) 10...g6 11 Be3 Bg7 (at least Black ought to capture the d-pawn here) 12 0-0 0-0 13 Nf3 Nc6, when Black doesn't have value for his pawns. I don't think this gambit has too much of a future from a theoretical point of view, although it could give an unwary opponent a nasty shock.

5...g6 is a completely different matter. Note that 5...dxe5 6 fxe5 g6 is a hybrid of this and the system in the note to Black's seventh in Game 33. Black decides to keep ...c7-c5 for later. It seems to me that White could meet that with 7 Nc3 Bg7 8 Bf4 0-0 9 h3 as I recommended in Game 33, but this is another largely untried line. By contrast, in the present system White doesn't have f4 for his bishop, but on the other hand if Black isn't careful dxe5 will become a strong reply to ...dxe5.

White hasn't unearthed a convincing reply to 5...g6 at the moment. Davies has suggested 6 Nf3, developing the kingside and reserving Nbd2 to defend the c-pawn (which doesn't look terribly threatened at the moment, I know, but bear with me). Black might consider meeting that with 6...dxe5 7 fxe5 Bg4, but the position is unexplored. Instead

the main line, insofar as there is one in such a backwater, is 6 Nc3 Bg7 7 Be3, and now Black has been doing well with the cunning 7...Be6. The idea of Black's move order is to bypass the supposed refutation 7...0-0 8 c5 N6d7, when 9 h4 is very dangerous, by defending d5 in order to allow 8 c5 Nd5. Returning to 7...Be6, 8 Qb3 a5 seems to force 9 a4 when ...Na6-b4 gives Black very decent play. Nobody seems that worried about 8 d5, which Black can meet with an ...e7-e6 plan, for example 8...Bf5 9 Be2 0-0 10 Nf3 e6. This leaves 8 Nf3 0-0 (the c4-pawn was indirectly defended by the usual Qa4+, but now it is really en prise), when the best White has managed is 9 Qb3 a5 10 Ng5 (10 a4 Na6-b4 again) 10...a4 11 Nxe6 axb3 12 Nxd8 Rxd8 13 a3 Nc6, which produces a fairly equal ending. 9 Nd2 fxe5 10 dxe5 c5 is worse, and 9 b3 c5 10 dxc5 N6d7! (a la Wohl!) 11 cxd6 exd6 12 Qxd6? Nxe5 is worse still.

5...g6 evidently deserves more popularity. It looks slightly strange to develop the king's bishop on g7 when the whole point of White's play has been to fortify e5, but keeping White's pawn on f4 until Black is ready for ...dxe5 and ...c7-c5 has obvious merits.

Anyway, returning to the position after 5...g5, the point of this move is clear. Black intends to remove the f-pawn and thus dismantle White's pawn centre. A good many books on the Alekhine have dismissed the move with a '?' – Davies isn't so sure, and I'm going to sit on the fence and say that I think it's probably bad at the end of the day, but it's not that simple. Two things are clear: most of the published refutations are rubbish, and the statistics say 5...g5 is a good move; Black has scored 59% on my database, although in large part that is due to the efforts of Michael Schirmer, a German correspondence player whose baby this line is, and who has scored a stellar 22/30 with it.

6 exd6

A very logical move, since it gets the e5-target out of the way before taking on g5.

The alternatives are Nf3, Nc3, Qh5 and fxf5 (6 d5 e6 is no good).

6 fxf5 is perhaps the least effective of these, but it does provide a good illustration of Black's idea with 5...g5. Black replies 6...dxe5, when White is forced into 7 d5 (7 dxe5 Qxd1+ 8 Kxd1 Bg7 9 Nf3 Bg4 is awful) and after 7...e6 Black already stands better.

6 Nf3 rather asks for 6...g4, which is Schirmer's choice and Davies' recommendation. 7 Nfd2 dxe5 8 dxe5 Qd4 is already better for Black, but 7 Ng5 is not so clear – presumably Black plays 7...dxe5 and now rather than 8 fxe5 Nc6 White has to play 8 c5 Nd5 and now 9 dxe5. This is just a little irritating for Black as 9...e6 leaves g4 en prise, 9...Nc6 10 Bc4 is annoying and 9...Bf5 10 Nc3 e6 11 h3 likewise (11...Bxc5? 12 hxg4 Bg6 13 f5). I'm not sure Black isn't better off with the arguably more thematic 6...gxf4 7 Bxf4 Bg7 8 Nc3 Nc6 9 Be2 dxe5 10 dxe5 Bg4, when he has all his pieces active and seems to stand well.

6 Nc3 is also sensible. It is not possible to transpose to the above line since 6...gxf4 7 Bxf4 Nc6 (or 7...Bg7) 8 c5 is good for White. Instead Schirmer has preferred 6...e6 to bolster the d5-square, although 7 exd6 cxd6 8 fxd5 then looks very strong to me. If this is the best Black can do then 6 Nc3 is a serious problem.

6 Qh5 was given as a refutation by Eales and Williams, and has an intimidating look, but in fact Schirmer has proved that Black is fine. In reply to 6...dxe5 7 Nf3 is the only pressing move. At one time 7 c5 Nd5 8 fxe5 was thought to be good, but Burgess' 8...Nb4 is virtually winning for Black – since the d-pawn cannot be defended (9 Qd1? Qxd4 and 10...Nc2+) White is obliged either to give up a rook for a couple of checks after 9 Nf3 Nc2+ 10 Kf2 Nxa1 11 Bc4 Qd7 12 Qxf7+ Kd8 and so on, or grovel with something like 9 Na3, leaving the d-pawn to its fate. 6 Qh5 dxe5 7 Nf3 at first sight looks very strong, but Schirmer's 7...Bf5 gives Black good play, for example 8 Nxe5 Bg6 9 Nxd5 fxe5 10 Nc6 9 Be3 h6 10 Nxd5? Bg6 11 Qh4 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 hxg5 13 Qxh8 Qxd4 with more than enough compensation.

6...Qxd6 7 c5 Qe6+ 8 Be2

White's line has some big names behind it – Hort declared that after 8 Qe2 here White was winning! This is an amazing misjudgment for such a player to make, as not only is White probably already worse after that move, but also it is obvious that 8 Qe2 is the worst candidate move at White's disposal since it allows Black to trade queens and thus free his queen's bishop for action. In fact the entire point of the otherwise hideously anti-positional c4-c5 was to force the queen to the horrid e6-square. After 8 Qe2 Nd5 9 fxd5 Bg7 10 Nf3 Nc6 11 Qxe6 Bxe6 12 Bb5 Ndb4 Black has excellent play and stands much better. Better is 8 Kf2 Nd5 9 Bc4 gxf4 10 Qf3 c6 11 Bxf4 Qg6 (Davies; 11...Bg7 is Mischke-Schirmer, annotated in Davies and on Chessbase by Schirmer) with unclear play.

8 Be2, however, is the most obvious move and in my opinion poses a severe threat to the survival of Black's system.

8...Nd5 9 fxd5 Bg7 10 Nf3 Nc6 11 Nc3 0-0 12 Qd2! (Diagram 24)

This is the star move. After 12 0-0? Ne3 Black is fine, but with this ruled out he is really struggling for counterplay. Black makes a logical attempt in this game, but comes off worse, and it must be an open question whether there is actually anything good he can do.

12...Nxc3 13 bxc3 Qd5 14 0-0 e5

This was Black's idea, but White has the answers.

15 Bb2 exd4 16 cxd4 Bg4 17 Bd1!

Another excellent move – the bishop takes part in the defence of d4 by coming to b3 or a4. For the moment Bb3 followed by d4-d5 is threatened.

17...Qd7

17...Bxf3 18 Bxf3 Bxd4+ 19 Bxd4 Qxd4+ 20 Qxd4 Nxd4 21 Bxb7 is a highly unpleasant ending for Black.

18 Ba4 Rad8 19 Kh1

And that's it. Since 19...Bxf3 20 Rxf3 Bxd4 21 Bxc6 bxc6 22 Rd3 wins a piece, Black has nowhere to go.

19...Rfe8 20 Qf2 1-0

I don't suppose it was obligatory to resign, but White has consolidated and is certainly winning. It was rather rude of me not to give a game of Schirmer's, but the above was such a clearcut performance it seemed impossible to omit it.

Statistics

Black has scored 59% after 5...g5, and 48% after 5...g6. 5...c5 has only been played in a handful of games.

Theoretical?

In a word – no. By all means sit down and toss out 5...g5 – if your opponent isn't more or less on his own you'll be very unlucky. The same goes for 5...g6, although it's wise to have an idea of how Black's counterplay against c4 develops, and 5...c5.

Theoretical Status

In my opinion, not so good for 5...g5. Both the game and 6 Nc3 pose Black a real and possibly insoluble problem. 5...g6, by contrast, is looking reasonable at the moment. 5...c5 is almost certainly unsound.

Chapter Seven

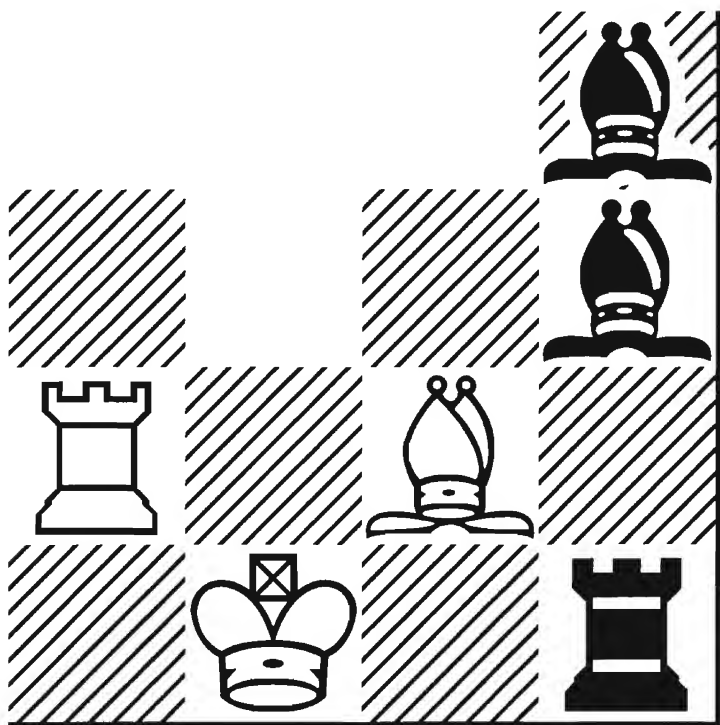
The Chase Variation



Introduction



Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 c4 Nb6 4 c5 Nd5 (Diagram 1)

4 c5 really is an ugly move! When we learned the game we were all taught that one simply can't do this sort of thing to one's light squares and the d-file. White's intention, however, is to develop quickly and render such structural considerations irrelevant. He reasons that by bringing Black's knight back to d5 and cutting off its obvious retreat square he will be able to gain tempi on the knight to bring his pieces into play quickly. Ideally he hopes to force ...Nxc3, when he will recapture with the d-pawn. He often leaves the c-pawn *en prise* to ...Bxc5, which he will meet with Qg4 and the follow-up Bg5, perhaps forcing the sequence ...Be7, Bxe7 Qxe7, Qxg7.

The Chase Variation, incidentally, is often used by players who also play the c3 Sicilian, since White more or less has to be willing to transpose to a couple of variations of that opening. It is not theoretically dangerous but Black does well to have a line against it in mind, and an idea of his plans in that line, if only because the positions arising are a little unusual.

5 Nc3

White wants to play something like the variation with 3 Nc3, but by moving his pawn to c5 first he aims to prevent the 3...Nxc3 4 dxc3 d6 defence mentioned in Chapter 8. In the present position 5...Nxc3 6 dxc3 d6 7 cxd6! (this is the difference – White can relieve himself of the doubled c-pawn) gives White a small advantage. It is also possible to play 5 Bc4, when the next move will usually be 6 Nc3. 5 d4 is feeble as 5...d6 6 cxd6 exd6 (6...cxd6 is a c3 Sicilian) is easy for Black.

Meanwhile, from Black's point of view, White's structure cries out for ...b7-b6. The exchange cxb6 axb6 obviously favours Black because his pawns remain united while White's are split into two islands. The plight of White's a-pawn is especially sad, isolated on an open file if Black should continue with ...Nxc3, bxc3. This also enables Black to achieve the desirable exchange of light-squared bishops with ...Ba6, working for his knight on d5 and highlighting the weakness of White's light squares after his first four moves.

Black has three main ways to meet the Chase Variation. 5...c6 without ...e7-e6 is seen in Game 35, 5...e6 6 Bc4 c6 in Game 36, and 5...e6 without 6...c6 in Game 37.

Illustrative Games

Game 35

□ T.Thorhallson ■ G.Burgess

Gausdal 1997

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 c4 Nb6 4 c5 Nd5 (Diagram 1)

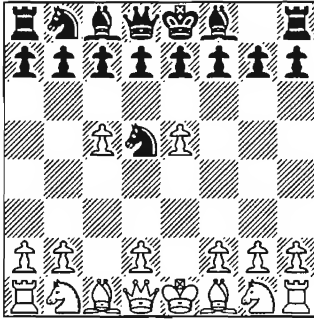


Diagram 1

The knight is forced back to d5

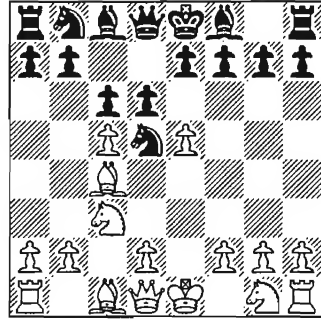


Diagram 2

Black seeks to clear the centre

5 Nc3 c6 6 Bc4

Usually White will meet 5...c6 with both Nc3 and Bc4 on moves 5 and 6. If he has started with 5 Nc3 then either 6 d4 or 6 Nf3 can be met by 6...d6 comfortably enough for Black. If White starts with 5 Bc4 then 6 d4 d6 is still nothing to worry about. Black should be aware though that 5 Bc4 c6 6 Qe2 will prevent 6...d6 and oblige him to continue with 6...e6, ...b7-b6, ...Ba6 as in Game 36, since after 6...d6? 7 exd6 the e-pawn is pinned.

6...d6 (Diagram 2)

With this variation Black is not aiming to punish White for his structural misdemeanours, rather to liquidate the advanced pawns immediately and equalize. But White has saved a tempo by attacking d5 twice before going d2-d4. He can now attack the knight a third time and simultaneously pin it.

7 Qb3

This is not the only move but it is the most testing and popular. White needs to take radical measures – if he lets Black develop and maintain the d5 stronghold he can hope for equality at best.

a) 7 Nxd5? is a mistake: 7...cxd5 8 Bxd5 e6 (and not 8...dxe5? 9 Qb3) 9 Bf3 dxe5 is already better for Black.

b) After 7 exd6 Black does best to flick in 7...Nxc3 (otherwise 7...exd6 8 Nxd5 cxd5 9 Bxd5 dxc5 10 Qb3 is a shade inconvenient, although possibly nothing tragic) 8 dxc3 exd6 when again he is already equal.

c) 7 Qf3 is met – as in the main game – by 7...Nd7!, which is even stronger with the knight coming to e5 rather than c5, hitting the queen and defending f7, e.g. 8 Bxd5 (8 exd6 misses the threat: 8...Ne5! 9 Qe4 Nxc4 10 Qxc4 exd6 11 Nxd5 Be6 is good for Black) Nxe5 9 Bxf7+ Nxf7 10 d4 g6 11 cxd6 Qxd6 and Black is fine, the two bishops and development compensating for the slightly ragged pawn structure.

d) The main alternative is the dull 7 cxd6 exd6 8 Nxd5 (or 8 Nf3 Be7 9 0-0 Nxc3 with equality) 8...cxd5 9 Bxd5 dxe5 10 Qb3 Qc7 11 Nf3 Bd6 12 0-0 0-0 which is equal, for example 13 d3 Nd7 14 Be3 Nf6 15 Rac1 Qe7 16 Bg5 h6.

7...Nd7

The key move of this variation. Black seems to be in trouble due to the pressure on d5 and f7 but he has some neat twists in mind.

7...dxe5 may also be playable but is tenuous.

8 Nxd5

8 exd6? Nxc5 is bad, while 8 cxd6 Nxe5 is complicated and untried but is thought to be good for Black, a sample line being 9 Nxd5 cxd5 10 Bxd5 e6 11 Bxb7 Rb8 12 Qa4+ Bd7 13 Qxa7 Rxb7 14 Qxb7 Bc6 15 d7+ Ke7 16 Qb4+ Kxd7 17 Qd4+ Bd6 which is terrible for White.

8...Nxc5

The point.

9 Nc7+ (Diagram 3)

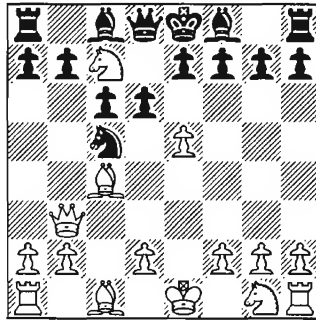


Diagram 3

The pace has quickly changed

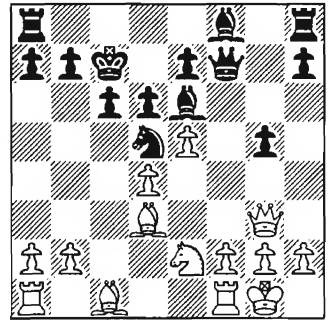


Diagram 4

Black's king seems fine

This is forced, otherwise White loses material, for example 9 Nf6+? exf6 10 Bxf7+?? Ke7 11 exf6+ gxf6.

9...Kd7

Black has a major alternative in 9...Qxc7 10 Bxf7+ Kd8 11 Qe3 d5 (or 11...e6!?). This is little played and theoretically stands well but it does not seem to be trusted by the grandmasters who play this line. At first sight the position looks terrible for Black, but the point is that White's bishop is well-nigh trapped and if it is exchanged for Black's knight White will be awfully weak on the light squares. White needs to avoid 12 Bh5? Qxe5, and 12 Nf3? Bf5 13 0-0 e6 is also feeble. The only GM game in this line continued 12 d4 Ne6 13 Nf3 (13 Bh5!?) 13...g6 14 h4 Ng7 and now 15 h5 Nxh5 16 Rxh5 gxh5 17 e6 is reputed

to give White compensation.

10 Qe3

10 Nxa8? loses: Black takes the queen and mops up the knight on a8 later.

10...Kxc7

According to theory at the time of this game Black already stands better.

11 Bxf7

The most natural move, although before this game it had been considered bad. 11 d4 Be6 12 Be2 Nd7 13 Nf3 Bd5 14 0-0 e6 probably does not give White enough for his pawn, while 12 b3 d5 13 Be2 Nd7 14 f4 Bf5 is better but still fine for Black. 11...d5 12 Be2 Ne6 13 f4 g6 14 g4 h5 – or here the untried 12 dxc5 dxc4 13 Bd2 Kb8 14 0-0-0 with a thoroughly unclear game – is also possible.

11...Qd7

In his book Burgess had given 11...Bf5 12 Bc4 d5 13 Be2 d4, which indeed is horrid for White, but he now avoids his own recommendation. I imagine the reason for this attack of shyness was 11...Bf5 12 d4 when 12...Nd3+ 13 Kf1 does not achieve as much as you might think – after 13...Nb4 it seems to me that the chances are about equal. The text is the prelude to a neat regrouping.

12 d4 Qf5 13 Bc4 Be6 14 Be2 Nd7 15 Bd3 Qf7 16 Ne2!

Better than 16 Nf3. The knight can take part in the fight for d5 from c3 and also takes aim at f4. As usual in this system Black does not at all want to allow the exchange of his light-squared bishop for a knight.

16...Nb6 17 0-0 Nd5 18 Qg3 g5 (Diagram 4)

The position is not clear to my mind. Burgess gives Black the edge in *NCO*, but I would prefer to say that both sides have chances.

19 Be4 Rg8 20 Bd2 Bh6 21 Rac1 Nf4 22 Nc3 Raf8??

A blunder. 22...d5 was necessary, with a very sharp position.

23 d5! Bxd5 24 Bxd5 cxd5

White's point is that 24...Nxd5 25 exd6+ exd6 26 Nb5+ is devastating.

25 exd6+ Kb8 26 dxe7 Qxe7 27 Nd5 Qd6 28 Bxf4 gxf4 29 Qf3

White is winning and the remainder is mopping up

29...Rg6 30 Kh1 Rfg8 31 Rfe1 a6

Not 31...Rxc7?? 32 Qxc7 Rxc7 33 Re8+; the insecure position of Black's king still tells.

32 Ne7 Rxc7 33 Nxc8 Rxc8 34 Rcd1 Qb6 35 b3 Rc8 36 Re2 Rd8 37 Rde1 Ka7 38 Re6 Rd6 39 Rxd6 Qxd6 40 Rd1 Qe6 41 Qd5 1-0

Statistics

Good. Black has scored 59% with this variation, although from a

small number of games. In fact the statistics are a poor guide throughout the Chase Variation; there are too few games and too many playable early options for them to mean much.

Theoretical?

Very much so. There are some tactics Black simply must know, and there is a lot to learn for a fairly rare line.

Theoretical Status

Unclear. There haven't been many games between strong players – the fact is that grandmasters don't usually go in for the Chase Variation.

Game 36

□ Halser ■ Konopka

Graz 2001

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 c4 Nb6 4 c5 Nd5 5 Nc3 c6

If Black is aiming for this system it is probably better to start with 5...c6, since 5 Nc3 c6 6 d4 is rare whereas 5 Nc3 e6 6 d4 is common. Probably it is fine to go 6...c6 even here, but White may be able to exploit the fact that he hasn't gone 7 Bc4 to gain a shade of tempo once ...Ba6 is played, either by delaying a bishop move or playing Be2/d3.

6 Bc4 e6 (Diagram 5)

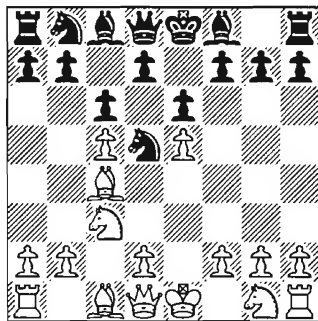


Diagram 5
A strange structure

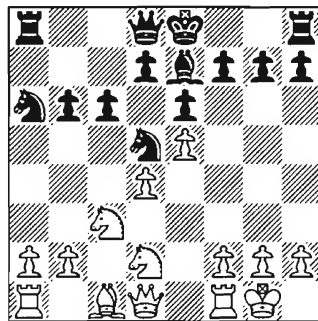


Diagram 6
Black focuses on d5, White on e4

This is another variation which may horrify the casual onlooker. What about that horrible hole on d6??? And surely Black isn't going to play the whole game with that cramping White pawn centre now that he's deprived himself of the ...d6 break?

It's not as bad as all that. Black can remove the c-pawn with ...b7-b6. He will then either remove the e5-pawn too with ...f7-f6, or fight for

space on the kingside with ...f7-f5 to keep himself from getting mated. And he will also remove White's light-squared bishop with ...Ba6, leaving himself with an inviolable outpost on d5. In fact this variation sometimes shows Alekhine's Defence in its most classically hyper-modern mould, as White's centre is dismantled from the side and Black's central pawns rule the board.

7 d4

This is the most popular move, but White has two other options. 7 Ne4 b6 8 Nd6+ Bxd6 9 cxd6 0-0 10 d4 Ba6 11 b3 c5 is fine for Black. If White ever wants to castle he can hardly avoid the trade of bishops, still less capture on d5, yet if he exchanges himself he can never hope to move Black's knight from d5. Meanwhile Black stands ready to dismantle the centre with ...f7-f6. 7 Qg4 was played by the ever-principled Russian GM Evgeny Sveshnikov on the only occasion he faced this variation, and so demands respect. Black should play 7...f5 8 Qg3 b6 9 cxb6 axb6 10 Nge2 Ba6 11 d3 Qe7 12 0-0 Qf7 (the key manoeuvre), continuing his development with ...Be7 and ...0-0 and earning a good game.

7...b6 8 cxb6 axb6 9 Nf3

9 Nge2 is possible. Usually it is better for the white knight to go to e2 in this line in order to keep in touch with d5. On the other hand after 9 Nge2 Ba6 10 Bb3 d6 Eduardas Rozentalis, one of the strongest players to use this line as White, was so disenamoured of his prospects when faced with this position as to play 11 Bxd5 and offer a draw.

9...Be7 10 0-0 Ba6 11 Bxa6 Nxa6 12 Nd2 (Diagram 6)

All according to the usual programme so far. Black is fine here. White now wants to take this knight to e4.

12...0-0 13 Nde4 Nac7 14 Qd3 f5 15 exf6 Bxf6 16 Be3 Qe8 17 a3 Be7 18 Rad1 Qh5

Black's play is totally thematic. White has nothing constructive to undertake against Black's firm central pawn structure and the monster knight, and Black has prospects of taking the initiative on the kingside.

19 Bc1 Rf7 20 Qc2 (Diagram 7)

20...Qg6 21 Rd3 Rf5 22 Rg3 Qf7 23 Rh3 Nxc3?!

This seems a strange exchange. It is true the recapture with the b-pawn hardly ends White's structural problems (spare a thought for the poor a-pawn), and in fact the c7-knight was feeling a little redundant, but White wasn't threatening anything and it was surely better to continue manoeuvring and prepare this move.

24 bxc3 h6 25 c4 Qf8 26 Rg3 Kh8 27 a4 Ne8 28 Rb3 Bd8 29 c5 bxc5 30 Nxc5

30 dxc5 was perhaps better. 30...Rxa4? 31 Rb8 is not possible, so the rook penetrates to b7 and ties Black down. White has pressure after

30 dxc5 Be7 31 Rb7 Rd5 32 Be3 Nf6 33 f3!, so Black must have gone wrong somewhere over the last few moves.

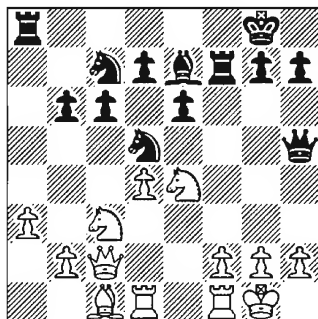


Diagram 7

Preparing to activate the rook

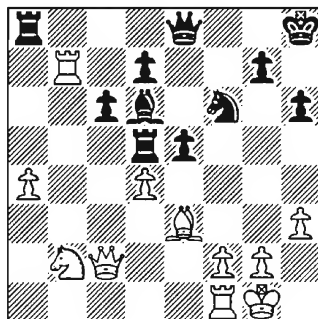


Diagram 8

An effective break

30...Nf6 31 Rb7 Rd5 32 Be3 Be7 33 Nd3 Bd6 34 h3 Qe8 35 Nb2 e5! (Diagram 8)

Structurally Black doesn't really want to dissolve the d-pawn weakness, but this gives him a strong initiative.

36 dxe5 Qxe5 37 g3 Qe6 38 Kg2 Rh5 39 Rh1 Bxg3! 40 Bxh6

40 hxg3 Qxe3 or 40 Kxg3 Ne4+ 41 Kg2? Qg6+ 42 Kf1 Ng3+ were the points, although in the last line 41 Kf3 Qf5+ 42 Ke2 Ng3+ 43 Kd2 Qa5+ 44 Kc1 Nxh1 45 Bd4 still gives White chances of resistance (suddenly Black's pieces are not so well placed), and was surely better than the text.

40...Qd5+ 41 f3

41 Kxg3 Ne4+.

41...gxh6 0-1

The rook comes to the g-file. A fine lunge in time trouble. Although Black's earlier middlegame play wasn't too convincing, his opening was.

Statistics

Good. Black has scored 53%.

Theoretical?

No. Break with ...b7-b6, put the bishop on a6 and develop, adding ...f6/f5 as necessary. The only manoeuvre to remember is ...f5, ...Qe7, ...Qf7 as a way of combating Qg4.

Theoretical Status

Good. White has so far shown nothing at all against this line.

Game 37

□ Rozenalis ■ Kuczynski

Bank Pocztowy Open 2001

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 c4 Nb6 4 c5 Nd5 5 Nc3

White can also play 5 Bc4 first, of course. After 5 Bc4 e6 the main independent idea is 6 d4. 6...d6 now is a c3 Sicilian, or Black can play 6...b6 7 cxb6 axb6 and continue as usual with ...Ba6 (and/or ...Nxc3 when the opportunity arises). White occasionally tries 6 Qg4 when 6...Nb4 is a good reply.

TIP: Generally in the Alekhine it is always worth considering ...Nb4 in reply when White plays Qf3/Qg4/Qh5

5...e6 (Diagram 9)

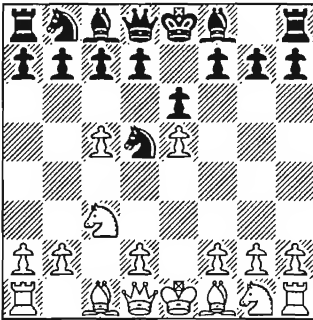


Diagram 9

Black hits the c5-pawn

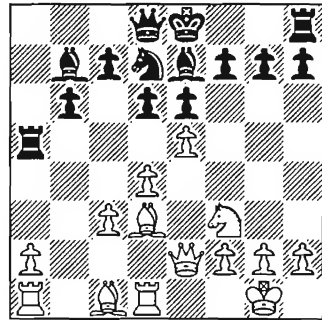


Diagram 10

Black begins a worthy set-up

6 d4

White has an important alternative here in 6 Bc4. This does of course leave the c-pawn *en prise* but White intends to meet 6...Bxc5 with 7 d4 Bb4 8 Qg4. This is complicated and little explored, and may well in some future world where chess is played entirely by supercomputers be assessed as good for Black. Black has two easier alternatives, however, but both involve tricky sequences and need to be learned. The first is 6...Nxc3 7 dxc3 Nc6 (Black wants to tempt 8 Nf3?! Bxc5, when White no longer has Qg4) 8 Bf4 Qh4. White's only way to defend the bishop without allowing 9...Nxe5 exploiting the skewer on the other one is 9 g3, when Black continues with 9...Qe7 and threatens to win the g-pawn with ...g7-g5. The most natural continuation is 10 Nf3 h6 11 Be3 b6 with a good game for Black (and not the instructive er-



ror 11...g5? 12 Bb5, when White continues by capturing on c6; the restrictive effect this has on Black's queen's bishop is striking).

Alternatively, the long-established solution to this line is 6...Nxc3 7 dxc3 Nc6 8 Bf4 Bxc5 9 Qg4 g5! 10 Bxg5 Rg8. This leads to slight complications which are fine for Black.

6...b6

6...d6 7 cxd6 cxd6 is a main line of the c3 Sicilian. Black can also play 6...Nxc3 7 bxc3 b6 and indeed Nigel Davies advocated that in his book, although White can then cause difficulties (not necessarily insoluble ones) with either 8 Qf3 or 8 Qg4 (threatening Bg5). It is worth just noticing that 8 cxb6 axb6 9 Qg4 is ineffective as Black has 9...c5, after which he can meet 10 Bg5 with 10...Qc7 – White's need to play Qg4 before cxb6 is a recurrent theme in the Chase Variation. The point of the text is that with the knight still on d5 neither of these queen moves offers anything. 7 Qf3?! can be met by 7...Bb7 or indeed 7...c6, while 7 Qg4?! is well met by 7...f5. The difference is that if 8 exf6 Black can recapture with the knight – if he had already exchanged on c3 and so had to use his queen to recapture he would not gain a tempo on White's queen (*au contraire* – White would shortly gain some time on his). Once ...f7-f5 is in much of the sting is taken out of White's Qg4 because Bg5 can now be easily met by ...Be7 as the g-pawn is defended after Bxe7 Qxe7.

7 exb6

Of course the price Black has to pay for delaying ...Nxc3 is that White can now exchange on d5. If he had done this on move 6 Black would have been able to equalise easily with ...d7-d6, but having committed himself to ...b7-b6 Black will normally continue with...Ba6 and a very sound game after 7 Nxd5 exd5 and either 8 Be3 or 8 cxb6 axb6 9 Nf3. The two themes Black has to remember (apart from the usual ...Ba6) are to send his knight via a6 and c7 (after ...c7-c6) to the superb e6-square, and to meet f2-f4 with ...f7-f5. Usually it will suit him to trade his dark-squared bishop for a knight if he gets the chance, and he may either break with ...d7-d6 or ...c5 at a suitable time or continue with ...b5 and pressure on the a-file.

7...axb6 8 Nf3 Nxc3 9 bxc3 Bb7

In fact I have taken a liberty with the move order as the game actually began with 6...Nxc3.

10 Bd3 d6 11 0-0 Be7 12 Qe2 Nd7 13 Rd1

White has also set up with his rook on e1, and has played Bc2 instead of Qe2, but these nuances do not change the fundamental nature of the position. Black's next regrouping is one to remember.

13...Ra5 (Diagram 10) 14 Bf4 Qa8 15 Ne1

White doesn't care to have his pawns damaged by ...Bxf3, but now Black has driven the knight away from its best position for an attack on the king (which is where White's chances must lie in this varia-

tion, and as a rule in this structure the knight is the most dangerous piece in such an attack).

15...0-0

Note how Black has delayed ...dxe5. Opening the d-file and freeing d4 can only benefit White unless Black is getting something in return.

16 Bc2 dxe5

Not 16...Rxa2 17 Rxa2 Qxa2 18 Bxh7+, of course, but now Black is ready for this.

17 dxe5 Nc5 18 Rd4 Rd8 19 h4 Ra3 20 Rad1 Rxd4 21 Rxd4 Qe8 (Diagram 11)

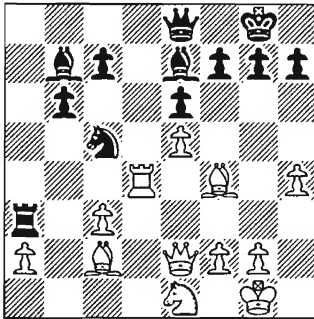


Diagram 11

Time to regroup (again)

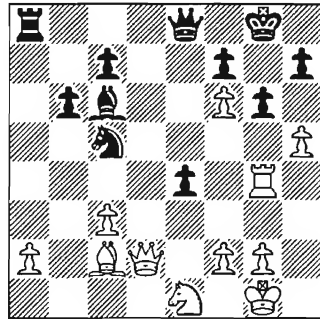


Diagram 12

Closing out the enemy bishop

There wasn't a concrete refutation of 21...Rxc3 – or if there was I can't see it: 22 Bg5 Bxg5 23 Bxh7+? Kxh7 24 hxg5 can be met by 24...Be4 shutting off the rook – but Kuczynski's choice is very solid.

22 Bg5 Ra8 23 Qd2 Bc6 24 Bf6

A thematic blow; of course 24...gxf6?? 25 Rg4+ mates, but Black responds well.

24...Bxf6 25 exf6 e5 26 Rg4 g6 27 h5 e4 (Diagram 12) 28 Qf4 Ne6 29 Qg3

29 Qe3 Nc5 was a draw, but White can continue attacking.

29...Qd8 30 hxg6 hxg6 31 Qh4

Of course 31 Bxe4 Bxe4 32 Rxe4 Qxf6 would allow Black's structural assets to come into their own.

31...Qd2 32 Bb3 Bd5 33 Bxd5 Qxd5 34 Rg3 Rxa2 35 Rh3 ½-½

It was not compulsory for Black to agree a draw: 35...Qh5 36 Qxh5?! gxh5 37 Rxh5 Nf4 is decidedly better for him, while after 36 Qxe4 Qg5 (attacking f6) 37 Rf3 Qd2, for example, he can certainly be confident about the future. Nonetheless a good game in which attack and de-

fence were equal to each other.

Statistics

Pretty good. Black has scored 50%.

Theoretical?

Not terribly – it is more important to know where to put the pieces after Nxd5 or in the game.

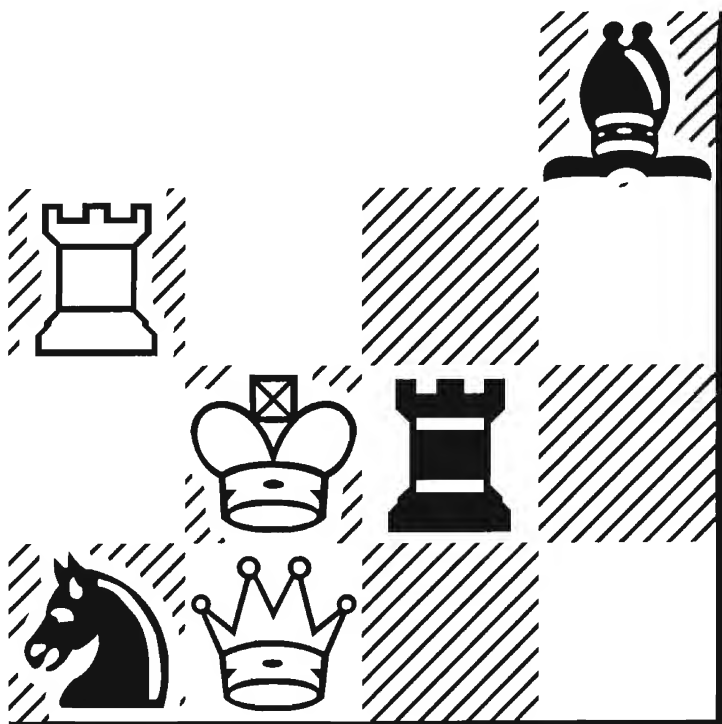
Theoretical Status

The guru of 4 c5, Sveshnikov himself, recently agreed a draw on move 11 in the main line, which suggests Black is in good health. Personally though I don't know that I care for the main line much. Black played well in the game and IF he can defend then White's split queenside pawns must tell in an endgame; but in other GM games in this line such players as Krasenkov and Morozevich have spent the whole game defending carefully.

Chapter Eight

Other Tries for White

-  Introduction
-  Illustrative Games



Introduction

Finally we come to White's attempts to avoid the more well-known, conventional lines. Some of the possibilities featured below serve White better than others, with the more respectable earning their own illustrative games. In Game 38 White follows up 1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 with 4 f4 to bolster the centre immediately, while Games 39 & 40 see 3 Nc3, White recapturing after 3...Nxc3 with the b-pawn and d-pawn respectively. Game 41 investigates a kingside fianchetto treatment from White, namely 3 g3, and Hector's interesting anti-Alekhine 2 Nc3 is the subject of Game 42.

White has a good many other ideas, some of them fairly dangerous, but none of them quite warrants a game to itself.

A Random Bishop Move

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Bg5 (Diagram 1)

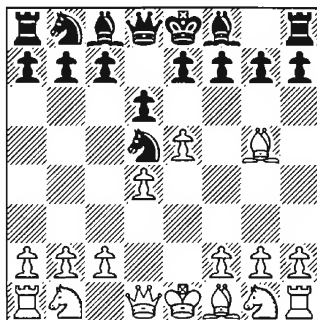


Diagram 1

Hasn't that knight gone away?

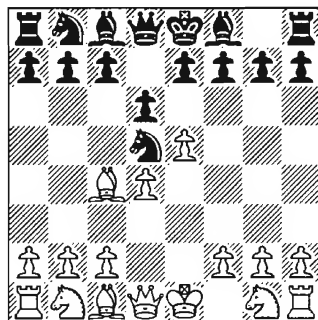


Diagram 1

A club players' favourite

This is without doubt the most historical of these ideas, having been played in the very first Alekhine's Defence game, Steiner-Alekhine, Budapest 1921. As it was featured in a recent ChessBase magazine, it may be due for a revival, although I rather doubt it. Alekhine's own treatment can be improved upon today only slightly.

4...h6 5 Bh4 dxe5 6 dxe5 Bf5

Alekhine actually played 6...Nc6 7 Bb5 Bf5 8 Nf3, reaching the same position, but White ought to have played 8 Bxc6+.

7 Nf3 Nc6 8 Bb5 Ndb4! 9 Na3 Qxd1+ 10 Rxd1 Nxc2+ 11 Nxc2 Bxc2

In the game Alekhine had not inserted ...h7-h6, and White could have obtained good compensation with 11 Rd4 at this stage, preventing

Alekhine's next move. With the bishop already on h4, however, the compensation is less as it cannot return to e3 to help with the attack. In this position Black already stands well, for example:

12 Rc1

Probably 12 Bxc6+ first is a better drawing try.

12...Be4 13 Nd4 Bxg2 14 Rg1 0-0-0

An important resource.

15 Nxc6 Bxc6 etc.

Another Random Bishop Move

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Bc4 (Diagram 2)

This move, by contrast, is quite common in amateur chess. It can be met in a number of ways and I present only the main line here.

4...Nb6

Black can also develop with 4...c6 followed by ...Bf5.

5 Bb3

5 e6? had a brief period in the sun in English club chess in the late 1970's but you are not likely to be lucky enough to encounter it now. The refutation is 5...Nxc4 6 exf7+ Kxf7 7 Qf3+ (White's sole point is that he can, contrary to appearances, win his piece back) 7...Ke8 8 Qh5+ g6 9 Qb5+ Qd7 10 Qxc4 Qg4, and White is busted.

5...Bf5

The old main line 5...dxe5 6 Qh5 e6 7 dxe5 is not so easy. From here Sax-Ghinda, Bath 1973 continued thematically: 7...a5 8 a4 Na6 (8...Nc6 9 Nf3 Nd4 is sounder but still a little better for White; both 9...Nd7 and 9...Bb4+ are alternatives) 9 Nf3 Nc5 10 Ba2 Bd7 11 Nc3 Nbx4 12 Bg5 Be7 13 Nxa4 Nxa4 14 Rd1 Nc5 15 Be3 0-0 16 c3 Qe8 17 Bxc5 Bxc5 18 Ng5 h6 19 Ne4 Be7 20 Nf6+ with a decisive attack since 20...gxf6 21 Rd3 mates. Ghinda's pawn grab is extremely dangerous but has been tried by Baburin with success.

TIP: In these structures with an open d-file and a pawn on e5 facing one on e6, Nf6+ is White's most dangerous attacking idea. (Tal-Gedevanishvili, note to White's 4th move, Game 39, is another example).

6 Qf3

This is not forced, of course, but if White simply continues with 6 Nf3 e6 7 0-0 Be7 he is in danger of eventually arriving at an Exchange Variation with his bishop misplaced; alternatively he may find it blotted out after ...d6-d5.

6...Qc8 7 Ne2

White's immediate ideas to get to f7 do not work – 7 Bxf7+ Kxf7 8 g4 Nc6 9 c3 dxe5, 7 g4 Be6 and 7 exd6 cxd6 8 Bxf7+ Kxf7 9 g4 Qxc2 are typical. After 7 Nh3 the simplest is Bagirov's 7...d5 (since 8 Bxd5



Nxd5 9 Qxd5 Nc6 is grim for White), after which Black can set up with ...e7-e6, ...c7-c5, ...Nc6 and so on, when White has a kind of French with his knights and king's bishop on very much the wrong squares, although 7...Nc6 – among others – is also possible.

7...e6 8 Nbc3

This has done very well for White, but to be honest I don't understand why. 8 Qg3 dxe5 9 dxe5 c5 (essential to free c7 for the queen and allow ...0-0-0) 10 c4 Nc6 led to a fascinating game and a win for Black in Skytte-Baburin, Copenhagen 1999.

8...dxe5

Often Black has chosen 8...d5 here, which seems like a bad idea to me. White's knights are ideally placed for harassing the black bishop with Ng3, Ne2-f4, and if it hides away on h7 White can plant a knight on h5 with a bind on the kingside.

9 dxe5 c5!?

This hasn't been played on my database. Instead Black has preferred 9...N8d7 to be followed by ...Nc5, which is also fine. But after 9...c5 I really don't know how White intends to meet the threat of 10...c4. The obvious attempt is 10 Ng3 Bg6 (not 10...c4 11 Nxf5 exf5 12 Ba4+ Nxa4 13 Nxa4 Qc6 14 Qxf5! Nd7 15 Nc3 Qxg2 16 Rf1, which I think favours White, although 11...cxb3 12 Nd6+ Bxd6 13 exd6 bxc2 14 Qg3 is interesting) but now I don't see what White intends to play with the sequence ...c5-c4, Ba4+ Nxa4, Nxa4 Bxc2 threatened. 11 h4 h5 changes nothing, defending the pawn with 11 Qe2 loses the g-pawn after 11...c4 12 Ba4+ Nxa4 13 Nxa4 Qc6, while 11 Na4 c4 12 Nxb6 axb6 13 Qc3 b5 is also grim, and altogether I think Black stands very pleasantly.

Yet Another Random Bishop Move

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Be2 (Diagram 3)

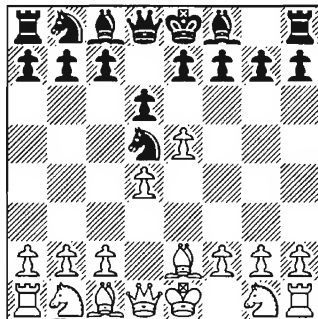


Diagram 3
Better than it looks

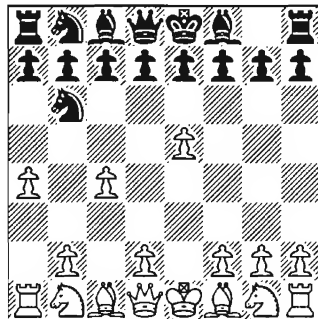


Diagram 4
As bad as it looks

This move is not fashionable and never has been, but it is quite dangerous and, statistically, has scored very well. The idea is to keep open the option of f2-f4 and meanwhile prevent ...Bg4. White's concrete intentions include 4...g6 5 f4 and 4...dxe5 5 dxe5 Nc6 6 Nf3 Bg4 7 c3 e6 8 Qa4 (or 8 0-0 Be7 9 Qa4), both of which are quite awkward to meet. Black's simplest reply is

4...dxe5 5 dxe5 Bf5 6 c3

6 Nf3 Nb4 amounts to a pawn sacrifice, though White does have some compensation.

6...c6 7 Nf3 e6 8 0-0 Nd7 9 Nbd2 N7b6 10 Nd4 Bg6 11 N2f3 Be7 12 c4 Nc7 13 Be3 0-0 14 Qc1 c5 etc.

This line is certainly safe, but it is fair to say that it aims at equalizing gradually. In the stem game Romanishin-Bagirov, Jurmala 1987, it took the great Alekhinist until move 112 to persuade White that he had achieved this. I am surprised we don't see more of 4 Be2.

A Really Random Pawn Move

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 c4 Nb6 4 a4 (Diagram 4)

A bizarre idea, but presently enjoying a vogue in certain circles. White's idea is 4...d6 5 a5 Nd7 6 e6!?. That's nothing to be afraid of, however. After, say, 6...fxe6 7 d4 Nc6 8 Nf3 g6 9 h4 Nf6, the position is similar to those in Game 20, except that White has played a4-a5 and Black has transferred his knight from b6 to f6, which must surely favour Black. But the simplest answer is...

4...a5

White can now head for Game 23 by 5 d4 d6 6 exd6 cxd6 7 Nc3 g6, or alternatively he could play 6 f4 with a Four Pawns Attack with the addition of a2-a4 and ...a7-a5, although I suspect this favours Black, whose pieces are more likely to use b4 than White's are to use b5. Likewise Black could and perhaps should meet 6 exd6 with 6...exd6. In these symmetrical Exchange structures where Black still has the option of ...Nc6 (as opposed to having played ...c7-c6 already) White's a2-a4 is pretty much in the nature of a positional error (especially when Black still has a knight on b8 ready to go to a6 and b4), since it means that the typical sequence d4-d5 Bxf3, Bxf3 Ne5 followed by the exchange of dark-squared bishops on, for example, g5, will leave Black with an immovable knight on c5 aiming forever at either the a-pawn or (after b2-b3) the b-pawn. This turn of events is of course not inevitable, but the need to avoid it restricts White's possibilities. I gather, however, that aficionados of this line favour the strange

5 Ra3

with the idea of taking the rook to g3 to inhibit Black's kingside development. I don't know of any games with this line but I'd suggest that Black proceeds with

5...d6 6 exd6 exd6

After 6...cxd6 I wonder if something with Re3 might justify White's play, for example 7 d4 g6 8 Nf3 Bg7 9 Be2 0-0 10 Bg5 Bg4 11 Re3 Nc6 12 d5. If White really wants to play 7 Rg3 now then this can be met with 7...Bf5 and 8...Be7, when capturing the g-pawn just loses material to ...Bg6 and ...Bf6. I don't see how White is going to make this work at all.

Random Tries after 2 e5

Apart from the main moves 3 c4 and 3 d4, White has some others that are occasionally seen. A bizarre transposition to 1 b3 occurs after 1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 b3 g6 4 Bb2 Bg7 5 c4 Nb6, when Black will be fine as long as he notices that 6 Qf3 threatens c4-c5 and thus avoids 6...0-0?? 7 c5 resigns and plays instead, for example, 6...e6 followed by ...Nc6, ...0-0, ...d7-d6 and so on.



TIP: Whenever Black has answered c2-c4 with Nb6 and does not control d5, he needs to watch out for c4-c5.

It's easy to ignore c4-c5 because of the ghastly hole it creates on d5, but it can be strong. The clearest example of this is the dreaded Voronezh (c4-c5 is particularly common after ...e7-e5, dxe5 dxe5), but a diligent search will reveal others in the Four Pawns (5...g5 6 Nc3 gxf4 7 Bxf4 Bg7 8 c5!, or 5...g6 6 Nc3 Bg7 7 Be3 0-0 8 c5!, for example).

3 Nf3 is better but only really transpositional. White's idea is 3...d6 4 Bc4, but 4...Nb6 5 Bb3 Bf5 hardly leaves him anything better than 6 d4, which transposes to 3 d4 d6 4 Bc4 Nb6 5 Bb3 Bf5 6 d4, above. 3 Bc4 Nb6 4 Bb3 d6 is another transposition as White cannot do better than 5 d4, leading to the same 4 Bc4 line.

3 Qf3 is occasionally played but really most moves will do for Black, for example Davies' 3...c6 followed by ...d7-d6 and either ...g7-g6 and ...Bg7 or ...Bf5 as appropriate.

White Avoids 2 e5

White does have a couple of other second moves which are worth having a look at. The first is 2 d3. Alekhine used to answer this with 2...e5. After 3 f4 Black then plays 3...Nc6. This is usually said to be nice for Black after either 4 Nf3 d5 or 4 fxe5 Nxe5 5 Nf3 Nxf3+ 6 Qxf3 d5. Some off-piste complications arise after 4 fxe5 Nxe5 5 d4. Retreating must be bad, so presumably the game then goes 5...Nxe4 6 Qe2 d5 7 dxe5 Qh4+ 8 g3 Nxe3 9 Nf3 and now Black's simplest is 9...Nxe2+ 10 Nxh4 Nxc1. Black is going to lose the knight on c1, of course, but the weak e-pawn and the two bishops ought to give him enough play with the three pawns against the piece. Failing that, however, White can obviously play some kind of reversed Philidor or Pirc.

Black does of course have numerous options on move 2, another sound possibility being 2...d5. White can either try 3 e5 Nd7 4 f4 with a rea-

sonably promising anti-French set-up, or 3 exd5 Nxd5 4 g3, which is likely to transpose to a Vienna line after 4...e5 5 Bg2 Nc6 6 Nc3, although White has committed himself to d2-d3, which is not the case in the Vienna. Alternatively, 2...c5 was played in the classic positional crush Thomas-Alekhine, Baden-Baden 1925, which can be found in Nimzovich's *My System* or in Alekhine's own book of selected games.

The second is 2 Bc4, the idea of this being 2...Nxe4 3 Bxf7+ Kxf7 4 Qh5+ and Qd5+ winning the piece back. That is probably fine for Black, but alternatives include 2...e6 followed by 3...d5, 2...d5 and 2...e5 (transposing to the Bishop's Opening), all of which should be equal, or the rather splendid 2...b5 3 Bb3 (3 Bxb5 Nxe4) 3...c5 4 e5 c4.

Illustrative Games

Game 38

□ Kupreichik ■ Z.Varga

European Championship 1992

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 f4 (Diagram 5)

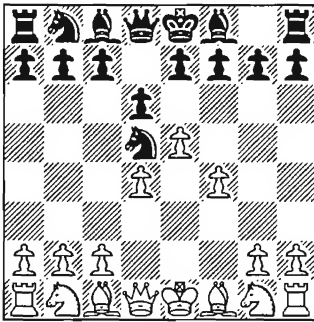


Diagram 5

White ignores the knight

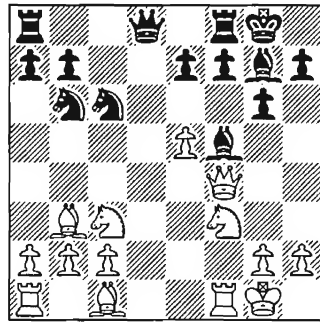


Diagram 6

A successful experiment

Rather a half-hearted looking system ('rubbish' – Andrew Martin). If White wants to support his e-pawn in this way surely it was better to drive Black's knight out of the centre first, especially since Black has a specific answer which prevents this? You might well think so, but some strong players of a non-theoretical bent have played 4 f4 regularly (Victor Kupreichik in particular has scored over 85% and chalked up such Alekhine specialists as Alburt, Varga and Kengis with it), so it deserves respect.

4...dxe5 5 fxe5 c5 6 Nf3

White has no decent alternative here. It would hardly be worth men-



tioning 6 c4? Nb4 if so many players hadn't made this mistake, including at least two 2500+ grandmasters. The entire purpose of Black exchanging on e5 before going ...c7-c5 was to prevent this by ensuring that now 7 a3 N4c6 8 d5? loses the e-pawn, while 7 d5 Bf5 8 Na3 e6 is also grim (9 d6 loses to 9...Qh4+ 10 g3 Qe4+).

TIP: When White doesn't drive the d5 knight away immediately, always watch out for c2-c4 Nb4 instead of ...Nb6

Another weak move is 6 c3 because White doesn't have the time to maintain a pawn on d4, for example 6 c3 Nc6 7 Nf3 Bg4 8 Be2 e6 already leaves Black threatening ...Bxf3 and ...Qh4+, winning the d-pawn, so the result will just be a similar structure to the game but with White having played the rather useless c2-c3. 6 Bb5+ Bd7 7 Bxd7+ Qxd7 also fails to improve White's prospects.

6...cxd4 7 Qxd4 Nc6 8 Qe4

Kupreichik's latest twist. After 8 Bb5 Black should give the tempting 8...Qa5+ 9 Nc3 Nxc3 a miss, as 10 Bxc6+ bxc6 11 Bd2 is deceptively difficult for him, and instead settle for 8...Bf5 and ...e7-e6, a well-respected recommendation of Kengis (which recently gave Black an 18-move victory in Pelikian-Milos, although it's fair to say that the game won't be in Pelikian's next book of selected games). In fact, this inspires me to make one of my rare theoretical suggestions: it seems to me that Black might do well to consider 7...Bf5. 8 Bb5+ Nc6 then produces a familiar position, and White doesn't have any other particularly devastating manoeuvre available (8 Nc3 e6 doesn't seem dangerous, nor does 8 c4 Qa5+ 9 Bd2 Nb4), so Black can obtain the set-up he wants with the bishop on f5 and ...e7-e6. The text is aimed at stopping this.

8...g6

Black could also have played 8...e6. According to various people 9 c4 is then slightly better for White, although this doesn't seem like much to me after, for example, 9...Bb4+ 10 Bd2 f5 11 Qd3 (11 exf6 Nxf6 12 Qh4 Bxd2+ 13 Nxd2 Nb4 is a poor idea) 11...Nf4 12 Qxd8+ Kxd8 when Black can set up comfortably with ...Ng6, ...Ke7, ...Bd7, ...Rhd8, ...Rac8, ...Be8 and so on. I would be more afraid of 9 a3.

9 Bc4 Nb6 10 Bb3 Bg7 11 0-0 Bf5 12 Qf4 0-0 13 Nc3 (Diagram 6)

Both sides had alternatives, but these last few moves have been the most natural, and we've reached the sort of position White was aiming for. Black has his chances, but White seems a little more comfortable to me.

13...Qb8

A slightly unnatural move, but Black is short of a good place for the queen. Part of Black's trouble is that he hasn't managed to exchange a pair of minor pieces and, as usual, this manifests itself in difficulty in coordinating all four with the queen in Black's cramped quarters. Burgess suggested 13...Nd7 with the idea of sending the queen to a5

instead, but I don't see that fundamentally affecting the position.

14 Re1 Nd7 15 e6

This is one trouble with Black's set-up. It is nice to have the queen's bishop active and the king's bishop pointing at e5, but it's never possible to play ...e7-e6 for fear of losing the bishop to g2-g4, and without it this break is always in the air.

15...fxe6 16 Qh4 Nc5 17 Ng5 h6 18 Nxe6 Bxe6 19 Bxe6+ Nxe6 20 Rxe6

Evidently Black is now worse. White is better developed and has a structural edge.

20...Bd4+ 21 Be3 Rf6 22 Rxe7!? (Diagram 7)

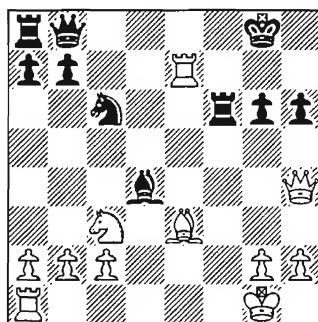


Diagram 7
Critical...

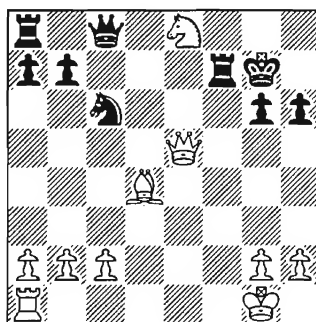


Diagram 8
Black's king is in trouble

22 Qe4 would have maintained a slight advantage but Kupreichik is what would be called a hacker were he not a grandmaster.

22...Rf4

22...Nxe7 23 Bxd4 Rf7 24 Ne4 Nf5 25 Qg4 Nxd4 26 Qxg6+ Rg7 27 Nf6+ Kf8 28 Qh5 with compensation was the crucial line according to the bulletin... White can draw with **28 Nd7+ Kg8 29 Nf6+**.

23 Qh3 Nxe7 24 Qe6+ Rf7

24...Kf8 25 Bxd4 Rxd4 26 Qf6+.

25 Bxd4 Qc8

25...Qf4 was essential, apparently.

26 Qe5 Kh7 27 Ne4 Nc6 28 Nf6+ Kg7 29 Ne8+ (Diagram 8)

A cute way to drive the king into the open.

29...Kf8 30 Qh8+ Ke7 31 Bc5+ Ke6 32 Re1+ Kd5 33 Ba3 Qg4 34 Qg8 Qd4+ 35 Kh1 Qf2 36 c4+ Kd4

36...Kxc4 37 Qxf7+ etc.

37 Rd1+ Ke5 38 Rd5+ Ke6 39 Qxg6+ Rf6 40 Nc7 mate

Statistics

Distinctly encouraging on the face of it – Black has scored 51% after 5...c5. On the other hand part of this comes from White players playing the awful 6 c4?, whereas after 6 Nf3 White has a worrying 69%, although really this just emphasizes how little faith can be placed in these small samples.

Theoretical?

Rare, and not terribly anyway. In my opinion my small suggestion is worth remembering, but I would say that.

Theoretical Status

Not enough games played to say – Black does need to take this system seriously, though.

Game 39

□ Padevsky ■ M.Vukovic
Smederevska Palanka 1971

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 Nc3 (Diagram 9)

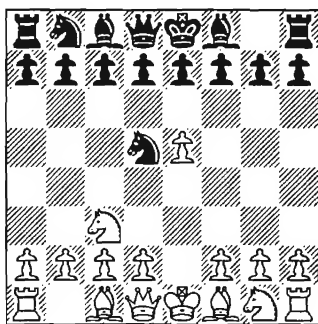


Diagram 9
White invites a trade

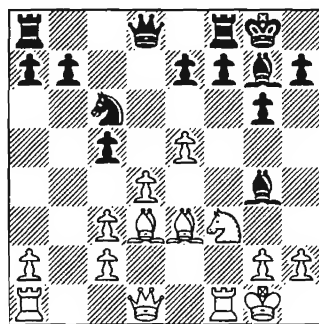


Diagram 10
Pressure on the centre

Not a move which theory holds in great esteem, but in its time it has been preferred by greats such as Mikhail Tal and Paul Keres, so it must have something going for it. In fact, in my opinion it is just as dangerous as, say, the Chase Variation.

3...Nxc3

This is Black's usual move. White's two recaptures lead to radically different types of game. We consider 4 dxc3 in Game 40.

4 bxc3

With this move White's intention is to build a big centre and use that space advantage to launch an attack on the kingside under the cover of his e5 pawn. The game Tal-Gedevanishvili, Georgia 1970, illustrates what White would like to happen better than any words of mine could, so I hope the reader will excuse me if I quote it without much explanation, especially as it features a lesser-known Tal combination (reason enough to quote any game). This continued 4...e6 5 d4 d6 6 f4 c5 7 Nf3 cxd4 (more cunning is 7...Nc6, after which 8 Be2? cxd4 9 cxd4 dxe5 10 fxe5 Bb4+ 11 Bd2 Nxd4 wins a pawn because 12 Bxb4 Nxf3+ and ...Qh4+ recovers the piece; but of course Tal would have avoided this trap, for example with 8 Be3) 8 cxd4 dxe5 9 fxe5 Bb4+ 10 Bd2 Qa5 11 Bd3 Nc6 12 0-0 (when this position arose again in a game played much later White played the senseless 12 a3? here; after castling White is much better) 12...Bxd2+ 13 Nxd2 Qc3 (13...Nxd4? 14 Nc4 and Nd6+) 14 Rf4 0-0 15 Kh1 Ne7 16 Ne4 Qb2 17 Rb1 Qxa2 (rather a hot pawn!) 18 Nf6+ gxf6 19 Bxh7+ Kh8 20 Rh4 Kg7 21 Qc1 Ng8 22 Bxg8 1-0.

So how can Black avoid this sort of thing? One method is to develop with 4...d5 and follow up with ...c7-c5, ...Nc6, ...Bg4, ...e7-e6, ...Be7, keeping open options with the king, perhaps of ...c5-c4 and ...0-0-0, or even ...Kd8-c7, or (if suitable) ...0-0. Assuming that White plays d2-d4 (he can also set up with f2-f4 and d2-d3), then this looks like a twisted Winawer French (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 with a subsequent ...Bxc3+), save that Black has retained his dark-squared bishop instead of a knight, and has developed his light-squared bishop outside the pawn chain. On the face of it these look like improvements for Black, and indeed this line is supposed to be fine for him, has scored well over the years and has been the choice of various Alekhine experts and grandmasters. If you like French-type positions, this is a sensible way to play. However, Black has to be aware of two differences from the Winawer. First, the knight on e7 in the Winawer is a useful piece for two reasons. One, it holds up an f4-f5 advance (so much so that f2-f4 is almost never the right plan for White in the Winawer). Two, by threatening to go to f5 it puts pressure on White's centre, and in particular means that White's dark-squared bishop cannot easily come to e3 to bolster the centre. A knight on e7 would in fact have more active possibilities than the bishop. Secondly, as any French player will confirm, if Black exchanges his 'bad' light-squared bishop for a knight, he is in danger of finding that White's light-squared bishop scythes him down once the game opens up. So the bishop being outside the pawn chain is not an unmixed blessing (it also prevents any restraint of f5 and g4 by ...h7-h5 or ...g7-g6: when White plays h2-h3, probably Black will have to play ...Bh5. White may then play g2-g4, which will further support an f4-f5 break. These reflections suggest that White ought to play f2-f4, Nf3, Be2 (not Bd3 – when Black has less pressure on the centre than he does in the Winawer he is very likely to want to play ...c5-c4, when Bd3 will simply have lost a tempo), Be3, 0-0, h2-h3, g2-g4 and then open his eyes

and see whether he is threatening f4-f5. In Yudasin-Ehlvest, Biel 1993, play did indeed proceed 4 bxc3 c5 5 f4 Nc6 6 d4 d5 7 Nf3 Bg4 8 Be2 e6 9 0-0 Be7 10 h3 Bh5 11 Rb1 Qc7 12 Be3 c4 13 g4 Bg6 14 Ne1, and White was indeed threatening the highly unpleasant f4-f5. Black, a 2650 GM, went on to be crushed. Of course one game proves nothing and various alternatives (11...Qd7 – Davies; 14...Be4 or 14...f5 – Burgess) have been proposed, but I think the system in the main game is a bit easier to play. In fact if I was going to play ...d5 I think I might be inclined to develop the bishop inside the pawn chain. If White is going to play for f4-f5 then it will come into its own after that, and it also has long-term prospects either on a4 or on g6 after ...f7-f6.

4...d6 5 f4

Plainly the only move. White cannot contemplate 5 exd6 cxd6, exposing his c-pawns along an open file, nor 5 d4 dxe5, exchanging queens and leaving White no compensation for his weaknesses, and 5 Nf3 also leads to the exchange of the e5-pawn and the loss of White's space advantage.

5...g6

This is the difference from the Tal game – Black blunts in advance the bishop he anticipates appearing on d3, and develops his own so as to pressurise the centre with ...d7-d6 and ...c7-c5. The game will resemble a strange kind of Grunfeld, except that Black has an extra pawn on d6 and White one on c2.

6 Nf3 Bg7 7 d4 0-0 8 Bd3

8 Be2 would be feeble – Black can develop much as in the game but play ...Bf5 instead of ...Bg4; the bishop is very strong here, constantly threatening c2 after an exchange on d4. 8 Bc4 is also possible and requires a little care. Black should not blithely play ...c7-c5xd4 and allow the bishop to settle on b3. It is dangerous there with the f-file open, and if Black removes it with ...Na5xb3 the recapture with the a-pawn will restore the integrity of White's pawns and gain White further time with the attack on the a-pawn which White can use to defend his centre. Instead I like Black's play in the old game Canal-Colle, Meran 1926, which went 8...c5 9 0-0 Qc7 10 Qe2 Nc6 when Black was already starting to annoy the bishop and thinking of ...Bf5 and ...Na5 to force its exchange on d3 for the queen's bishop (a highly desirable exchange for Black), so much so that Canal lost quickly after lashing out with 11 e6 f5! (sorely restraining White's queen's bishop and king's rook – note how useful it is that Black has not exchanged pawns and thus there is still a pawn on f4).

8...c5

Actually I think it is more accurate for Black to play 8...dxe5. Exactly now, once White's bishop is committed to d3 (one wouldn't want it coming to c4 after opening the f-file with ...dxe5) and before Black commits himself to ...c7-c5. It is useful to know whether White is going to recapture with the 'd' or the f-pawn. In the former case ...c7-c5

is not necessarily something Black wants to play. 8...dxe5 9 fxe5 will transpose to the game, but after 8...dxe5 9 dxe5 I believe 9...Nc6 10 0-0 f6 is a very good idea – it hasn't been played but by opening the long diagonal up in this way it seems to me that Black exposes the weakness of the c-pawns. In such a plan ...c7-c5 is a complete waste of a tempo. I won't fill up the page with variations, but I think Black is already at least equal here, e.g. 11 Bc4+ Kh8 12 e6? Na5 13 Qe2 Qd6, threatening both ...Qc5+ and ...Nxc4, is good for Black, and 11 exf6 Bxf6 or 11 Be4 Bg4 are also fine.

9 0-0 dxe5 10 fxe5

Keres preferred 10 dxe5, a now forgotten but dangerous variation. White's c-pawns then do not make a pretty impression, but they are hard to attack, and they also help by ensuring that his minor pieces will have at least one stable post on the d-file to keep out Black's rooks. Meanwhile, once he has developed his bishop to e3, his queen to e1 or e2 and his queen's rook to d1, White has active ideas such as Ng5-e4, Bf2-h4 or Qh4 to consider, while for Black it is harder to find a constructive plan.

10...Nc6 11 Be3 Bg4 (Diagram 10)

This position has been reached in many games and is fine for Black. Right now d4 is en prise – hence White's next, to meet 12...cxd4 with 13 Bxc6.

12 Be4 Qa5 13 Qe1

Possibly 13 Qd3 is better, meeting 13...Rad8 with 14 Qc4. This occurred in a game where Solozhenkin was Black, and he lost badly, but why he rejected the obvious 14...cxd4 15 cxd4 Rc8 at this point I don't know. Black seems to be reasonably placed then.

13...Rad8 14 Rd1 Bxf3 15 gxf3

15 Rxf3 loses material to 15...cxd4 16 cxd4 Qxe1+, decoying the rook from the defence of d4.

15...Qxa2 16 f4 e6 17 Ra1 Qc4 18 Bd3 Qd5 19 dxc5 f6

An important theme.



TIP: In this line it is usually essential to break White's centre, and that means employing every pawn break available, even if it does weaken e6.

Otherwise White can build up in peace with his space advantage while the g7-bishop is inactive, as can also happen in the Grunfeld.

20 exf6 Bxf6 21 Rd1 Be7 22 Qf2 Qh5

White's exposed king and ragged pawns give Black a near decisive advantage.

23 Rb1 e5! 24 Be2

24 Rxb7 exf4 wrecks White.

24...Qf5 25 Rxb7 exf4 26 Bd4 Bf6 27 Rd1 f3 28 Bc4+ Kh8 29 Bxf6+ Qxf6 30 Rxd8 Rxd8 31 Bf1 Rf8 32 Rd7 Ne5 33 Rd6 Qg5+

34 Kh1 Rf4 35 c6 Rf7 36 Re6 Re7 37 Rxe7 Qxe7 38 Qd4 h5 39
Bd3 Kh7 40 Qe3 a5 41 Bf1 Qc7 42 h3 a4 43 Qc5 Nxc6 44 c4 Qd7
45 c3 Qe6 46 Kg1 a3 47 Qxa3 Qe3+ 48 Kh1 Qf2 0-1

Statistics

4 bxc3 as a whole has brought White 52% (4...d6: 54% White, 4...d5: 47% White).

Theoretical?

Not really. Black's moves (attacking d4) in the main line flow very obviously. Probably the only things worth committing to memory are how to meet 8 Bc4 and the timing of my idea 8...dxe5 (assuming Black likes it!), but these can be worked out from the ideas of the line.

Theoretical Status

Comfortable. Strong Black players seem to prefer 4...d5, but I don't really understand why. Black has always done fine with 4...d6. Perhaps it is a question of taste.

Game 40

□ Adams ■ S.Agdestein

Oslo 1994

This game is annotated by Igor Stohl in his marvellous *Instructive Chess Masterpieces*, and my notes are based on his. I cannot recommend this book too highly.

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 Nc3 Nxc3 4 dxc3

With this move White announces a very different strategy – essentially he aims to develop his pieces as fast as possible and derive some benefit from piece play. He recognizes that the e-pawn cannot be maintained after 4...d6, but hopes to gain further time while Black is exchanging it.

4...d5

Just as in the last game, Black can also play 4...d6. A couple of reasons not to, though, are first that it tends to lead to a rather dull game (if Black is lucky) and, secondly, that this is the easiest variation in which Black can lose in 20 moves in the whole of Alekhine's Defence. Indeed after 5 Bc4 dxe5?? 6 Bxf7+ he can manage it in six.



WARNING: In any Bc4 line, always check for Bxf7+ before playing either ...Nb6 or ...dxe5.

However, after 5 Bc4 Nc6 6 Nf3 dxe5 7 Qxd8+ Nxd8 8 Nxe5 f6 and ...e7-e5, or 5 Bf4 Nc6 6 Nf3 dxe5 7 Qxd8+ Nxd8 8 Bxe5 c6 (again followed by ...f7-f6, ...e7-e5, ...Bg4, ...Be7, ...Ne6 and so on) Black should be fine. The slightly dangerous line is 5 Nf3. Now Black can either go in for the poorly charted 5...Nc6 6 Bb5 Bg4 (6...Bd7 7 Qe2 is more difficult but quite possibly also adequate) or play the conventional

'equaliser' 5...dxe5 6 Qxd8+ Kxd8 7 Nxe5 Ke8. Black has to be a bit careful here. With his king where it is he is probably well advised to settle for ...Nd7, ...e7-e6, ...Bd6 type plans rather than aim for ...f7-f6 and ...e7-e5. Meanwhile White may try the irritating 8 Bb5+. Because 8...c6 weakens d6 and hence prevents the above plan, and 8...Nd7 leaves Black a bit tied up after 9 Bf4, Black has replied 8...Bd7, but then 9 Nxd7 Nxd7 gains the two bishops and leaves Black with a slightly thankless position, although those who like endgame grinds might find it appealing.

5 Qf3 (Diagram 11)

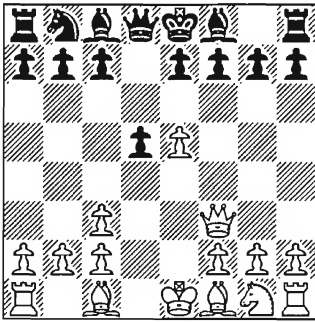


Diagram 11

White prepares a quick 0-0-0

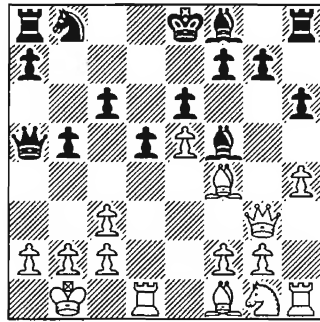


Diagram 12

Black clamps down on c4

White has many other ways to develop, of course, for example 5 c4 c6, 5 Bd3 c5, or 5 f4 Bf5, but in any event Black's plan of ...c7-c6, ...Bf5/g4, ...e7-e6, ...Nd7 should give him a decent position. The text attempts to stop this plan by preventing ...Bf5.

5...c6

Davies recommended 5...c5 with enthusiasm. The trouble may be that Stohl's 6 Be3 more or less obliges Black to play 6...e6, undesirably blocking in the queen's bishop. Agdestein prefers to keep open the possibility of developing this on f5.

6 Bf4

It is a pity to allow the bishop to f5, which rather negates White's idea with 5 Qf3, but White is a little short of a convenient developing move, especially since 6 Bd3 allows 6...Nd7, intending ...Nc5, when 7 e6 Ne5 8 exf7+ Nxf7 9 c4 e5 10 cxd5 cxd5 is given as okay for Black by Adams, 11 Bb5+ Bd7 12 Qxd5?? losing to 12...Qa5+. Nonetheless I can't believe 6 Bf4 is the best move. In fact I am tempted to say that even a 'pass' would have been better – when you look at the measures Adams later has to take to try and blot out Black's queen's bishop you may agree.

6...Bf5 7 0-0-0 e6 8 Qg3 h6 9 h4 Qa5 10 Kb1 b5! (Diagram 12)

It may not be my place to say so, but Adams has not played the opening too effectively and I suspect Black is already better. The text rules out c3-c4, and without that move it's not easy to see how White is going to counteract Black's mating attack on the queenside.

11 Nf3 c5

The idea of Davies' 5...c5 is in effect to get this kind of position a tempo ahead of this game, but even as it is Black is doing very well.

12 h5 Na6 13 Nh4 Bh7

Apparently Agdestein pointed out 13...Be4 after the game, the idea being that if 14 f3 Bh7 White's rook cannot be effectively deployed on h3. This looks like a very difficult idea to meet indeed.

14 Qg4

The start of a desperate plan.

14...b4 15 Bd2 c4 16 Ng6! (Diagram 13)

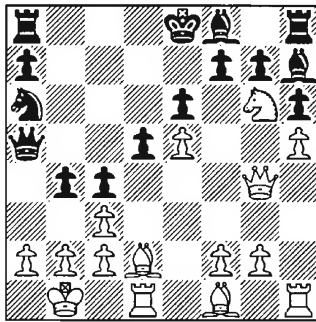


Diagram 13
Active defence

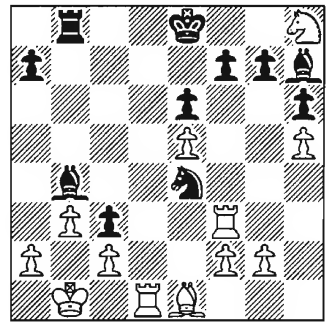


Diagram 14
The tide has turned

This was White's idea. The razor bishop on h7 simply has to be blunted.

16...Rb8

Of course not 16...fxg6? 17 Qxe6+ etc. Black has various ways to try and take the knight, but any time the sequence ...fxg6, hxg6 Bg8 occurs White must have at least reasonable compensation as Black has a couple of pieces totally out of the game, possibly for ever.

17 Rh3

Not 17 Nxb3, but ...

17...Be7?

Again Agdestein pointed out 17...Qb6 directly after the game. It was thought that this won for Black; the variations are too numerous and

complicated to give here, but White's basic problem is that his knight is now en prise as the queen defends e6, and that 18 Nxb8 still goes down in flames after 18...b3 19 Ka1 bxc2 20 Bc1 Qxb2+ 21 Bxb2 Ba3 22 Bxa3 Rb1+ and mates. 18 Be3 Bc5 is not so good either. 18 Bc1 fxc6 19 hxg6 Bg8 seems to be critical, though. Instead Stohl spends a couple of columns showing that 17...b3! gave Black very good winning chances.

18 Bxc4! dxc4 19 Qxc4 Qc5

Black has already missed the boat, but 19...Bxc6 was a better chance according to Stohl.

20 Qxc5 Nxc5 21 Nxb8 Ne4 22 Be1 bxc3 23 b3 Bb4?

This loses. According to Adams 23...Bf5 24 Rf3 Bg4 25 Nxf7 Bxh5 26 Nd6+ Nxd6 27 exd6 Bxf3 28 gxf3 Bf6 29 d7+ Ke7 was about equal, but Stohl gives the unnatural 24 Rh1 as all but winning.

24 Rf3 (Diagram 14)

Decisive. Black cannot defend the f-pawn as 24...Bf5 25 Nxf7! comes anyway.

24...Nd2+ 25 Bxd2 Rd8

25...cxd2 26 Kb2 and 27 c3 changes nothing.

26 Nxf7 Rxd2 27 Rc1 Ba3 28 Nd6+ Ke7 29 Rxc3 Bxc1 30 Kxc1 Rxf2 31 g4 Rg2 32 Rc4 Re2 33 Rc5 Rg2 34 Nb5 Rxc4 35 Rc7+ Kd8 36 Rxa7 Rg5 37 Nd4 Kc8 38 Nxe6 Rxh5 39 Rxc7 Be4 40 Rg8+ 1-0

Adams' greater practical strength decided this game, but White needs a fundamental improvement before he treads this path again.

Statistics

Overall White has scored 55% after 4 dxc3, although he makes 57% after 4...d5 and only 53% after 4...d6.

Theoretical?

Not at all – certainly not after 4...d5. 4...d6 needs a bit more study.

Theoretical Status

Has been considered equal for a very long time, but this variation (after ...d7-d6 at any rate) will suit someone with White who likes queenless semi-endings. For example the Bulgarian GM Ivan Radulov scored 5.5/6 with it. For Black the choice is definitely a question of taste – 4...d5 is a more fighting move.

Game 41

Rozentalis Adams

Bundesliga 1998

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 g3 (Diagram 15)

This is the only other serious try for White on move 3. At first sight a

kingside fianchetto doesn't seem to go with e4-e5, and the same is also true at second and third sights. White does, however, have a cunning idea, which is that the natural (and common) sequence 3...d6 4 exd6 cxd6 5 Bg2 Nf6 6 d4 g6 7 Ne2 Bg7 8 0-0 0-0 9 c4 Nc6 10 Nc3 produces a position variously described as an English or a Fianchetto King's Indian, but either way supposed to be slightly disagreeable for Black.

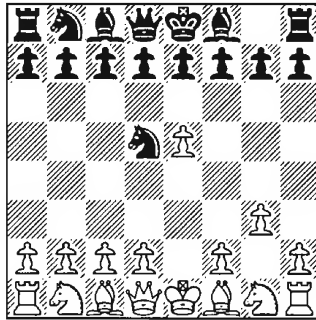


Diagram 15
An unexpected fianchetto

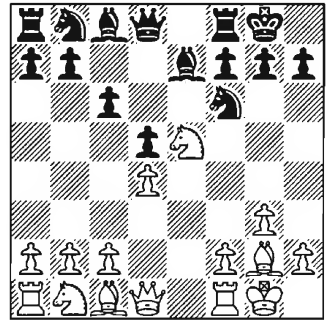


Diagram 16
A barrier

3...d6 4 exd6

An important moment. Any of the three recaptures is reasonable. Black can perfectly well adopt the line given above with 4...cxd6. He should then continue with 10...a6, ...Bd7, ...Rb8 and aim for ...b7-b5. Alternatively 4...Qxd6 is solid, for example 5 Bg2 e5 6 Nbc3 Nxc3 7 bxc3 gives Black an extra tempo (...Qd6) on the 3 g3 Vienna. That isn't an unmitigated bonus, since with the queen on d8 his normal move would be ...Bd6, but Black ought to be fine after, for example, Baburin's 7...c6, or 7...Nc6. White has generally done best with a plan involving Ne2, 0-0 and Rb1, avoiding any adventures with h2-h3 and g3-g4 in reply to ...Bg4.

4...exd6 5 Bg2 Nf6 6 d4 Be7

6...d5 and 7...Bd6 is also possible.

7 Nf3

Rozentalis has also played 7 c4 against Miles, after which Miles' 7...d5 was more than adequate – White has either to accept the isolated d-pawn after 8 cxd5 (which seldom goes with a fianchetto) or – as Rozentalis did – play 8 c5, when the game continued 8...0-0 9 Ne2 b6 10 cxb6 axb6 11 0-0 Ne4 12 f3 Nd6 (a fine regrouping) 13 Nbc3 c6 14 Bf4 Re8 15 b3 and Black was already at least equal and could, perhaps, even have posed White problems with 15...Nf5.

7...0-0 8 0-0 d5 9 Ne5

Not the only move, of course, but if White wants to aim for anything he surely has to try this.

9...c6 (Diagram 16)

TIP: It is often useful to erect a sturdy pawn barrier such as this against a fianchettoed bishop.

In the present case this strategy is especially effective, since if White wants to attack the pawn barrier he has to play c2-c4, which involves weakening his d-pawn.

10 Nc3 Ndb7 11 f4 Nxe5 12 dxe5

There must have been considerable psychology involved here. Four years before Rozentalis had reached this same position against Appel and had continued with 12 fxe5 Ne8 13 Qh5. Commentators had now suggested 13...f6 14 Bf4 as Black's best, still with a slight advantage for White. It is fair to assume Adams didn't agree with this. Adams seldom plays the Alekhine and Rozentalis is very loyal to this system. Adams surely knew this and was aiming for this position; Rozentalis must have known this; Adams must have known that he knew, and so on. In fact Adams had already twice played the Alekhine against Rozentalis, and on both occasions Rozentalis had ducked this line and preferred 2 Nc3 e5, so both players must have been ready for this position. Meanwhile, after 12 fxe5 Ne8 13 Qh5 f6 14 Bf4 Qb6 I can't really see how White proposes to demonstrate compensation for the pawn he's about to lose. Judging from this game 12 dxe5 isn't much good either, so possibly the whole Ne5 manoeuvre is misguided and White would do better to settle for equality earlier. The fine finish of Rozentalis-Appel, incidentally, is wonderfully annotated in Jonathan Rowson's *The Seven Deadly Chess Sins* (25 a4!).

12...Ng4! (Diagram 17)

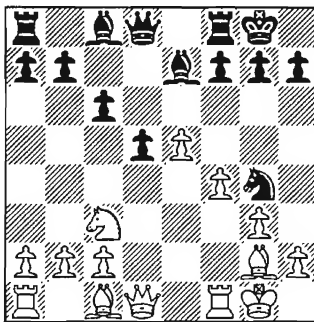


Diagram 17
The aggressive option

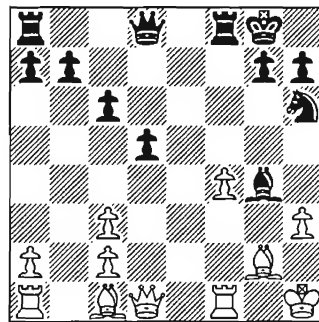


Diagram 18
White's defences collapse

Far better than 12...Ne8. Black can take the initiative on the king-

side. 13...Bc5+ is threatened.

13 Kh1 f6 14 h3 Nh6 15 exf6 Bxf6 16 g4

Rozentalis surely must have thought that he was forcing Black back, but in fact the contest is already over. Evidently White should have played more conservatively during the last few moves, but it is clear that he was already struggling to equalise.

16...Bxc3 17 bxc3 Bxg4! (Diagram 18)

It's hard to imagine Rozentalis hadn't seen this at all, but he must have miscalculated a few moves back. This is really quite a simple sacrifice for players at this level to calculate.

18 hxg4 Qh4+ 19 Kg1 Nxc4 20 Rf3

The only try as 20 Re1 Qf2+ 21 Kh1 Rf6 22 Qxc4 Qxe1+ 23 Kh2 Rh6+ 24 Bh3 Re8 is crushing.

20...Rae8 21 Bd2

White doesn't have any defence to the slow plan of doubling on the e-file and invading on e2.

21...Re4 22 f5 Rfe8 23 f6 gxf6 24 Bh3 Re2 0-1

Black threatens 25...Nh2 (among others) and there is nothing to be done.

Statistics

White scores 54% with 3 g3 as a whole but has usually been higher rated. After 4...exd6 he scores 59%, after 4...cxd6 it is 54% and after 4...Qxd6 down to 49% (completing a hat trick in this chapter where all my recommendations have scored worse than the alternatives for Black!).

Theoretical?

No – one contest has seldom followed a previous one.

Theoretical Status

Equal – the better player will win. The main game with 12 fxe5 is supposed to be better for White, but we can assume Adams at least didn't believe this, and probably Rozentalis as well. For what it's worth, I don't either.

Game 42

Hector Anagnostou

Komotini 1992

1 e4 Nf6 2 Nc3 (Diagram 19)

What kind of move is that?? White ducks the theoretical debate and allows Black the option of 2...e5, transposing to the Vienna or (after 3 Nf3 Nc6) the Four Knights, both of which are supposed to be equal for Black and have been for quite some decades.

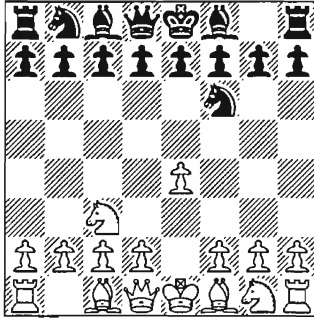


Diagram 19
White 'ignores' the knight

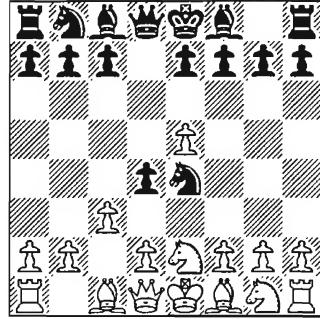


Diagram 20
An unusual position

2 Nc3 is actually extremely common below international level – I have met it in over 50% of my games with the Alekhine – so it is worth preparing for and, personally, I recommend 2...e5. I believe this is the strongest option and, as luck would have it, Everyman publishes two excellent books on the Vienna and Four Knights by Gary Lane and Jan Pinski respectively...

It may seem like a nuisance to have to learn a defence to two other whole openings when you want to play the Alekhine, but after all if you were going to play 1...e5 you'd need a defence to these openings as well as the Scotch, Ponziani, King's Gambit, Ruy Lopez, Guioco Piano, Danish Gambit and so on. Moreover at least some of those 2 Nc3 players are bluffing and know nothing about either of these openings themselves. For example Chris Baker's *Startling Opening Repertoire* recommended 2 Nc3 and airily assured readers that '2...e5 is uncommon!' In any event there's a lot to be said for tackling the opening by playing the moves you believe to be the best.

The only independent move, though, is 2...d5, and that is the subject of this game.

2...d5 3 e5

White can also play 3 exd5 Nxd5 4 Bc4 (or 4 g3 b6!?, or 4 d4/Nf3 Nxc3 5 bxc3 g6, or 4 Qf3 Nb6/Nb4). 4 Bc4 needs a modicum of care and attention – in particular 4...e6? 5 Bxd5 exd5 6 Qe2+ winning a pawn (6...Be6 7 Qb5+; 6...Be7 7 Qe5; 6...Qe7 7 Nxd5) should be avoided (although Black does have some compensation in the second line).

WARNING: This is a very popular trap

The safest is 4...Nb6 5 Bb3 Nc6 (and certainly not 5...e5 6 d3 Nc6 7 Nf3, when defending f7 is awkward, especially since 7...Bg4 8 h3 Bh5 9 Nxe5 is either the end or the start of a very unpleasant experience involving having your king chased down to e2 or so after 9...Bxd1 10



Bxf7+ Ke7 11 Bg5+ Kd6 12 Ne4+ Kxe5 13 f4+ Kd4 14 Rxd1 and so on, depending on how you look at it). After 4 Bc4 Nb6 5 Bb3 Nc6 6 Nf3 Black can develop either with ...Bf5 and ...e7-e6 or with ...g7-g6, playing ...e7-e6 only if forced by Ng5. In either case he has no particular problems.

3...Ne4

Black has two alternatives. 3...d4 4 exf6 dxc3 5 fxg7 cxd2+ allows either the dull 6 Qxd2 Qxd2+ 7 Bxd2 Bxg7, when White continues with 0-0-0, Ne2 and Bc3 and can claim a slight advantage based on his more compact pawns, or the dangerous 6 Bxd2 Bxg7 7 Qf3, a favourite of the ingenious Swedish GM Jonny Hector, when 7...Bxb2 is rather rash, and otherwise White continues with 0-0-0 and is decidedly better developed. 3...Nfd7 may well be best. The d-pawn is en prise, of course, but 4 Nxd5 Nxe5 5 Ne3 c5 6 b3 Nec6, followed by ...e7-e5, is fine for Black. Alternatively 4 e6 fxe6 5 d4 c5 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 Bb5 g6 8 dxc5 Bg7 9 Be3 Qa5 10 0-0 is probably about equal. 4 d4 c5 invites either this line or a tame line of the French after 5 Nf3 e6, while 5 Nxd5?! cxd4 6 Qxd4? Nb6 sees White lose a piece. However, note that after 3...d4 4 Nce2 Black probably has no better than 4...Ne4 returning to the game.

4 Nce2

4 Nxe4 dxe4 5 d4 allows either equality via the tedious 5...exd3 or the more speculative and virtually uncharted 5...Bf5, while 4 Qf3 Nxc3 5 dxc3 is Game 40. The text is the critical move, aiming either to trap the knight or to drive it somewhere hopeless with gain of tempo.

4... d4

4...f6 is an alternative, but I don't think Black is doing very well after 5 d3 Ng5 6 Bxg5 hxg5 7 h4 g4 (7...gxh4 8 Nf4 g6 9 Rxh4 has been looked at askance since a game Vorochnikov-Kengis, Riga 1983, which is worth playing through if you can find it on a database). White can play 8 Nf4, when his plan is simply to take the g-pawn with Be2. Black has various ideas – 8...g6 9 d4 (preparing a retreat for the knight) 9...Bh6 10 Nd3 Na6 11 Be2 c5 12 Bxg4 and 8...c5 9 Be2 Nc6 10 Bxg4 Qc7 (not 10...Nxe5 11 Bxc8 and 12 Qh5+) 11 Bxc8 Qxe5+ 12 Qe2 Qxf4 13 Nh3 are a couple of ways of giving up the pawn, and 8...Bf5 9 Nge2 Nc6 10 Ng3 Qd7 11 d4 tries to hang on to it, but in none of these cases does Black look terribly good to me.

5 c3 (Diagram 20)

The critical move. Now Black can, contrary to one's first impression, play 5...dxc3, since 6 Qa4+ does not win a piece, although Black did apparently resign here in one obscure Russian game. On the contrary 6...Nd7 7 Qxe4 Nc5 followed by ...Nd3+ is just fine for Black. 6 bxc3, however, leaves Black little option but Bagirov's magnificently unabashed 6...Nc5 7 d4 Nca6, for example 8 Nf4 e6 9 Nf3 c5. Black will continue with something like ...cxd4, ...Bd7, ...Bc6, ...Nb4-d5. This is very little tested but Davies likes it for Black once he has come this

far. I find it rather hard to believe Black can really play like this. In the only game in which it was played White did play 8 Nf4 and subsequently exchanged this knight for the a6 knight when it arrived on d5, which already looks like a horrible positional error to me, and followed up with Be4xd5, which looks even worse. White should either relocate his e2-knight to h5 to stop Black developing his kingside, or else put it on e4. Indeed 8 Nf4 already looks like the wrong square to me. I would have thought 8 Ng3 kept the choice between these two options open longer, as well as making a Qg4/Bg5 hack possible.



TIP: In this structure the last thing White wants is to exchange pieces – he has more space and his chances lie in an attack on the king.

Additionally, Black has too many pieces which want to be on d5. In particular once Black has his bishop on e6 and his a6-knight on d5, the other knight only has the miserable d7-square and, as Natasha Regan pointed out to me after the recent 4NCL game Culverhouse-Regan, his (or her) queen is sorely pressed for a decent square. On the other hand Black's text move also leaves him under real pressure on a couple of fronts.

5...Nc6

This involves a positional pawn sacrifice which I don't really trust.

6 Nxd4

White simply takes the pawn. His other dangerous line is 6 Nf3. Now the natural 6...Bg4 is under a cloud after 7 Nexd4 Nxe5 8 Qe2 Qd5 9 Nb5! with the idea of 10 c4. Black seems to be bordering on lost here. Instead 6...dxc3 7 bxc3 Bg4 has also been tried, but recently Hector, the knight of this variation for White, demonstrated an effective plan with 8 d4 Qd5 9 Qc2 e6 10 Bb2 g5 11 Nc1! (simply playing to round up the e4-knight) 0-0-0 12 Bd3. Then Fritz quite likes Black after 12...Bxf3 13 gxf3 Nxc3 14 Bxc3 Nxd4 15 Bxd4 Qxd4 16 Rb1 Qxe5+ 17 Kf1, but I think most humans would back the piece, and Hector won shortly.

6...Nxd4

6...Nxe5? loses to 7 Qe2 Qd5 8 Nb5.

7 Qa4+ c6 8 Qxd4 Qxd4 9 cxd4 Ng5 (Diagram 21)

10 Bd3

10 Bc4 has been much more common but centralising the bishop on e4, where it can be cemented in by d3, seems logical to me. On b3 it does nothing except wait to be exchanged for the d5-bishop, whereas on e4 it cannot really be exchanged and contributes to White's kingside play. Hector turned to the text after a rare loss in this line with 10 Bc4 Be6.

10...Ne6

White's immediate point was that Black can't send his bishop to d5 as he would like without first removing his knight to c7, since 10...Be6

11 h4 wins a piece.

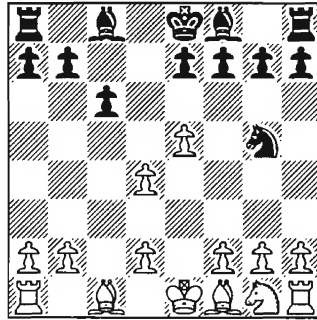


Diagram 21
Sufficient compensation?

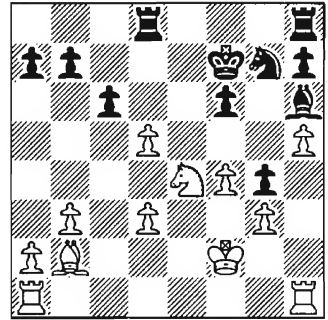


Diagram 22
Putting the extra pawn to good use

11 Ne2 g6 12 Be4 Nc7 13 b3 Bh6 14 h4 Be6 15 h5 Rd8

Black might consider 15...a5 and ...a5-a4 here, but it is not going to solve his basic problem, which is that his position is cut into two halves and he has less space.

16 Bb2 g5 17 f3 g4

White has arranged his pieces the way he wants them and so has Black, but I don't think Black has value for his pawn.

18 f4 Bd5 19 d3

This is the point. White is able to avoid the exchange of light-squared bishops as bringing the rear d-pawn to e4 is unthinkable for Black. When White's bishop is on b3 facing Black's on d5 he is constantly menaced by ...a5-a4, forcing the trade.

19...Ne6 20 g3 Ng7

This looks crazy but is part of a plan which becomes apparent over the next few moves. The knight looked pretty on c7 but in fact it was redundant. Because Black can never contemplate an exchange on e4 the knight can never reach the dream d5-square.

21 Kf2 f5 22 exf6 ep exf6 23 Bxd5 Rxd5

Black has played purposefully to force this exchange but, in so doing, he has had to put his bishop and knight offside, and White is able to change course decisively. 23...cxd5 24 Rac1 is worse still.

24 Nc3 Rd8 25 Ne4 Kf7 26 d5 (Diagram 22) 26...f5 27 Bxg7 Kxg7 27...Bxg7 28 Ng5+.

28 Nc3 cxd5 29 Nb5 a6 30 Nd4

It seems as if Black has won his pawn back and may be over the worst, but in fact White enjoys a decisive initiative based on the off-

side bishop.

30...Kf6 31 Rac1 Rc8 32 Rxc8 Rxc8 33 Re1 Bf8 34 Re5 Bc5 35 Rxf5+ Ke7 36 Rxd5 Bxd4+ 37 Rxd4 Rc2+ 38 Ke3 Rg2

38...Rxa2 39 f5 is also hopeless.

39 Rb4 Rxc3+ 40 Ke4 b5 41 a4 bxa4 42 bxa4 Rh3 43 Rb7+ Kf6 44 Rxh7 g3 45 Ra7 Rxh5 46 Rxa6+ Kf7 47 Kf3 Rd5 48 Kxc3 Rxd3+ 49 Kg4 Rd1 50 Kg5 Rg1+ 51 Kf5 Rc1 52 Ra7+ Kg8 53 Kg5 Rg1+ 54 Kf6 1-0

Hector's realization of his advantage, in keeping with his style, was impressively concrete, and it may be that this obscures the fundamental features of the position, but I don't think Black can expect to score at all well from the sort of position that arises round about move 16 or 17 in this game.

Statistics

White has scored 58% from the position after 3...Ne4

Theoretical?

Not really. Remembering the first six or seven moves and having an idea of the plans is probably enough, although it is worth remembering to steer clear of 5 c3 Nc6 6 Nf3 Bg4.

Theoretical Status

Not that good in my view. Jonny Hector has been waging war on 2...d5 on all fronts, and his ideas have put White well ahead just now. Such Alekhine specialists as Baburin and Varga generally play 2...e5, and I think that's the way to go. If you don't mind the French then 2...d5 3 e5 Nfd7 (Alekhine's original method, by the way) is reasonable, but Black's other methods all look poor to me.

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5...g6 (introduction 12)

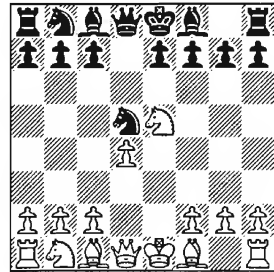
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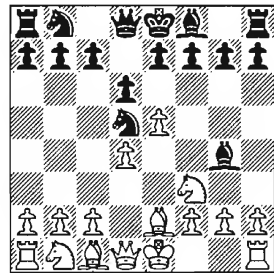
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Main Line with 4...g6/4...Nc6

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3

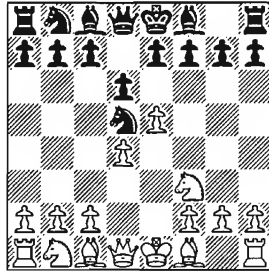
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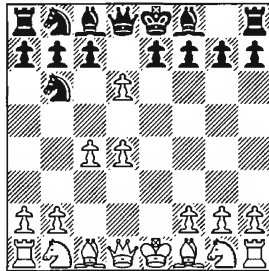
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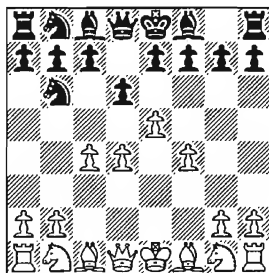
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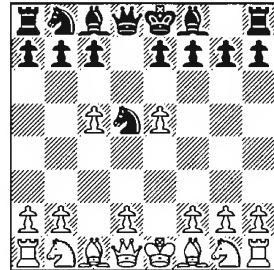
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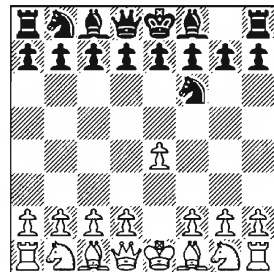
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starting out: alekhine's defence

Alekhine's Defence is a sharp and controversial opening in which Black attacks from the very first move, provoking White into lunging forward in the centre. White is often able to construct an impressively large central pawn formation, but Black's hope is that this becomes over-stretched and disintegrates in the face of a vicious counterattack. Unsurprisingly, Alekhine's Defence has always been a favourite amongst uncompromising players such as Fischer and Alekhine himself, while more recently it's been utilised by the likes of Ivanchuk and Short.

In this easy-to-read guide, openings expert John Cox goes back to basics, studying the essential principles of Alekhine's Defence and its numerous variations. Throughout the book there are an abundance of notes, tips and warnings to guide the improving player, while key strategies, ideas and tactics for both sides are clearly illustrated.

- User-friendly lay out to help readers absorb ideas
- Concentrates on the key principles of Alekhine's Defence
- Ideal for the improving player

John Cox is a FIDE Master and experienced international player. He won numerous junior titles including the British and London Under-18 Championships. This is his first book for Everyman.



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